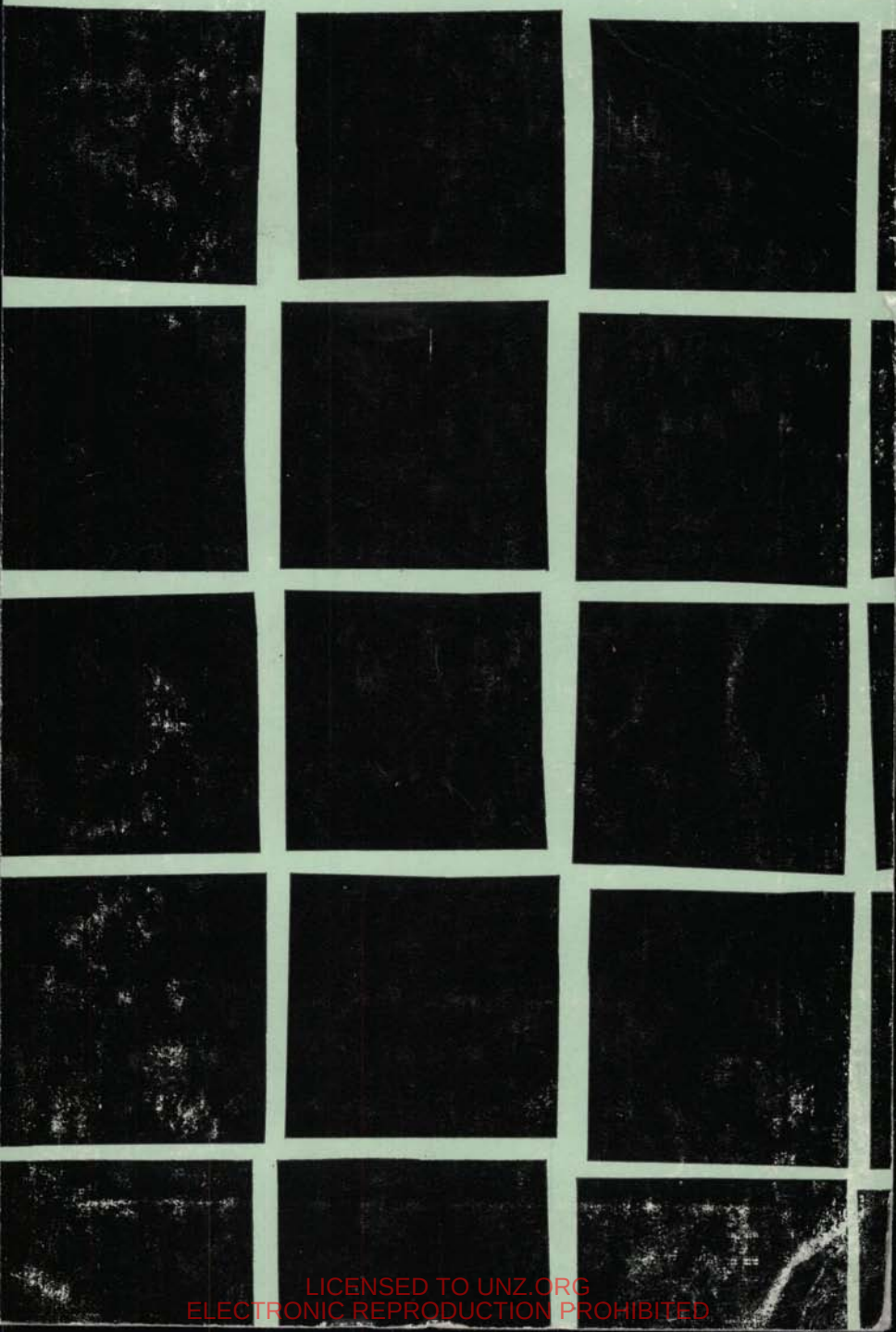


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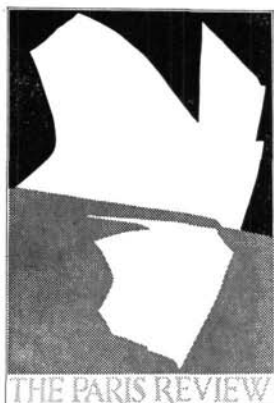
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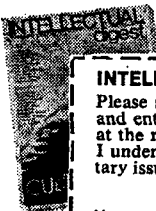
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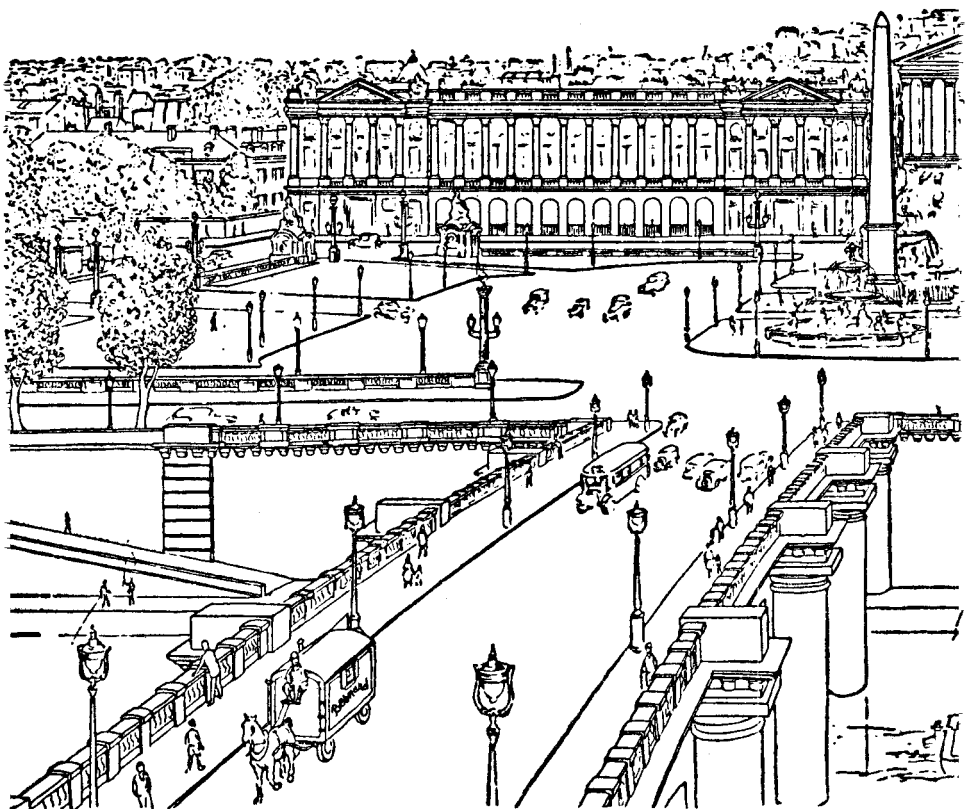
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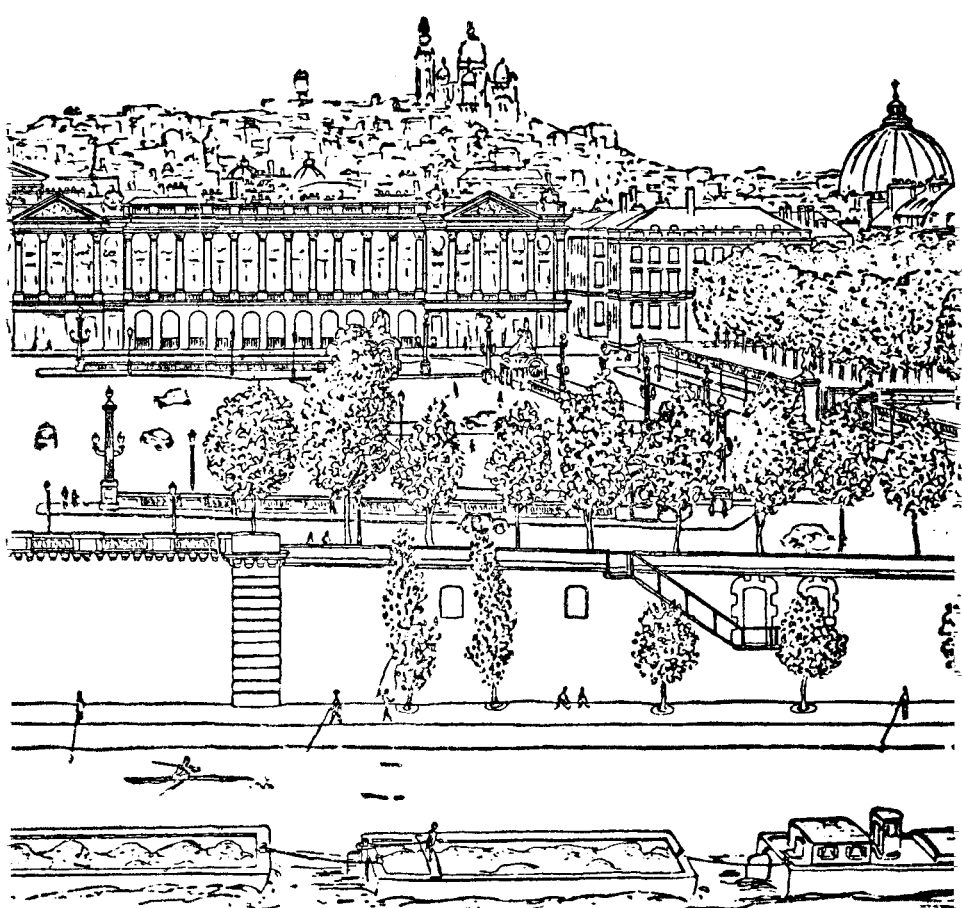


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For Irving: A Conversion

Kenneth Bernard

Irving was the most charming fellow you would want to meet. I mean that. At first, of course, you stiffened. Irving did that to people. He was an albuminoid. He was one with Karloff and Chaney, one of the greats. But you soon softened. Because Irving was really a sweet person. He talked just above a whisper in a curiously melodious, high-pitched, singsong voice. And with utmost sincerity. When Irving spoke, you felt like a chosen creature, and although you knew he was brilliant you never felt stupid with him. Another thing, he was nearly blind. His long, cartilaginous nose supported twin microscopes, through which he seemed always to be peering. But never really at this world. That is my most lasting impression of Irving, a sepulchral peering figure. He was ubiquitous in that guise. Once I saw him walking through an IRT subway train and worried lest he fall between the cars and be crushed. Another time I saw him close by a lamppost in Greenwich Village, as if for safety or security. I shouted at him, partly because of a peculiar joy and partly because I knew he would not see me going by. He peered at me in confusion until I identified myself. Then we swapped a few quick reminiscences about school, where we had been, briefly, colleagues. He asked timidly if I thought he might drop by

and pay his salutations to the department. I hesitated, because Irving had left under something of a cloud, and then said of course. When I walked on, he was joined by a female, who took him by the arm. She was not a beauty, but neither was she weird. I felt almost like crying at the thought that Irving might be sleeping with her, partaking of *some* of the pleasures of this world. He was so repulsive physically. I have barely gone into it. He had no figure to speak of (he was a wraith) and what he had was bent over. He walked as if a plumb line hung from his nose. His hair was all kinky white although he was only about thirty. But you did not really think of Irving in terms of years. He existed outside of chronology. The ravages in his sad narrow face either reflected all the plagues of history or nothing. And who can understand such woe? He was a kind of emaciated Jewish Uncas. Yet his pale eyes were kind. There was no bitterness in them. No matter what you said, they looked down at you with wonderful sympathy. You felt so human when you talked to Irving. I guess because you pitied him and were happy to give him something to respond to. Irving was well liked by the staff. His brilliance irritated no one. He was writing a dissertation on a mid-European Marxist few of us had even heard of, let alone read. It seemed proper that Irving should be esoteric. But I don't mean to give too strongly the impression that Irving was unearthly. He was also very human. For example, he had an older sister in Williamsburg who was having trouble getting married and who supported his old and sick parents. These were the remnants of his family. They lived more or less in severe poverty from what I could gather. I never questioned Irving too far, though I admit to strong curiosity about them. Irving lived with them also, but since many schools were reluctant to hire him he gave little to the family funds. He helped in other ways. For example, he ate around as much as he could. Faculty cocktail parties were a boon to him; he hovered over the hors d'oeuvre table like some hebephrenic holy spirit. And when we went to a restaurant, Irving was never hungry. But he ate the free pickles and coleslaw, and the extra rolls. If anyone was not as hungry as he

thought, Irving “nibbled” from his dish. Similarly, he obtained the books he needed with a minimum of expense. And here he revealed no little sense of humor. For several weeks during our association, Irving teased me regularly with a small piece of yellow paper. It was very old and wrinkled and might well have come from a cave in the Negev. He would glide by my desk with a sly chuckle and, as I looked up, quickly hide the yellow paper. Questions were of no avail. Irving was determined to keep me dangling in suspense. I guessed it had something to do with books because I had been joking with him about the large number of desk copies he had been getting. A large part of his chuckling I was convinced was gloating. We enjoyed the game for several weeks and then very late one Friday afternoon when we were alone in the shadows, he waved the yellow paper in front of my eyes and at last explained the mystery. I could not read the writing. It was, he said, a list of publishers. I must have looked astonished because he cackled with great pleasure. They were, he said, the names of publishers from whom he wanted books. I asked him why he didn’t put down the names of the books too. Wasn’t it difficult to remember which books went with which publisher? I think Irving must have loved me for that question. He let out another loud cackle of glee and showed me all his teeth. It gave me an extraordinary feeling. His laughter was followed by a prolonged “Ahhhh!” as he rolled up the text and put it away carefully. No. That would have been too incriminating. There were forces in this world which he, Irving, must beware of. This way only he knew everything. It turned out to be quite a bit more elaborate. Irving had various academic friends (never named) scattered all over the city. These he freely impersonated on the telephone and ordered desk copies of books in anthropology, history, philosophy, and God knows what else. And only in hard covers. Paper books were not worth the effort. His library must have been immense, stretching from the dawn of man’s consciousness to the distant darkness. Apparently Irving’s disciples did not mind being his instruments. Perhaps they felt themselves in the service of some higher

good which only Irving knew. I suppose a lot of Irving's ubiquitous quality was because of his making the rounds to pick up his treasures. Irving went *everywhere*. The truth of his perigrinations shocked me of course, though I did not let him know. He had really gone too far. But then I said why not. Why shouldn't Irving brighten his dismal existence with something he loved? It was all a rat race anyway, wasn't it? And the publishers could certainly spare the books. At least Irving would read them, and understand them, and keep them from unclean hands. Months after Irving had left, there were rumors about certain books in our own library. But I never credited them. Irving would never have done anything to *us*. And if he had he would have taken only books that were rarely, if ever, read, so that their absence would not be noticed until he was in his grave. Time would have enveloped the deep motives in Irving's life; we should have had only a mystery to mull on. It was shortly after the revelation of the yellow paper that Irving borrowed his first dollar from me. It seemed, at the time, a strange kind of test of my sincerity. He had had no lunch, he said, and would not be home until late. That exchange was the first of many. I could not have kept track if I had wanted to, for Irving paid my dollars back at odd moments and in odd proportions. Also he overlapped his borrowing and repaying. He had his own unique system of credits and debits, which finally transcended the mere exchange of money, made it, in fact, seem coarse and crude even to attempt exact figures. I have never for a moment worried about the final tally of our economic relationship; in fact, I *miss* giving Irving dollars. He had that quality which made you feel good when you lent him money. You hoped he would forget it. It was all you could do not to offer him more. For the same reason I enjoyed watching him eat. It was as if I said to myself, "Eat, Irving, eat. You, too, deserve to live." I am aware of, and ashamed of, the horrible condescension in what I am saying. But I cannot help it; it is the truth. I think I could have fed Irving myself, it was such a miracle to see him continuing the struggle for life. And he was so grateful. If you said good morning to him, his response

was such that you felt like a Christ blessing the lepers. You were only too happy to do anything you could for Irving. For example, his fears. Irving had collected them for centuries. If you mentioned casually to him that *they* were after him, it was as if a wind from the tomb had struck him. You quickly retracted, but it did no good. For days, for weeks, he was after you at odd moments, sometimes trying unsuccessfully to joke about it, sometimes wheedling a little. Was it true? Were there rumors about him? What had I heard? Surely some truth lurked even behind my joke, if that was what it was. God knows what harmless crimes he harbored in his fragile chest. It would have been funny except that he so visibly suffered, actually began to die before your eyes. No man was ever so hounded. It took him several months of Talmudic dialogue with me to decide when to see the chairman about a renewal of his contract. If it was too early wouldn't it be presumptuous? or foolish? But exactly when would it be too late? Should he wait for him to take the first step? What constituted a first step? Perhaps it had already been taken and he had missed it? When was he *least* busy? Should he write? Would it be an insult? What kind of paper, style, heading? Or should he just broach the subject in the flesh? Casually, perhaps, at lunch? No. Never while eating. Did I know what he thought about him? No, of course I couldn't betray any confidences, but... It turned out that it was all for nothing. Unfortunately Irving was not to remain with us. It would have required that all history be rewritten. He was lamentably absent-minded. He was brilliant and made up brilliant examinations. No one in the whole department could have passed. Some of his students broke down in tears when they read his midterms and finals. And I know some students' lives have been permanently touched by Irving's disquisitions on Job. But Irving created chaos. He carried night with him. He never handed in his freshman theme folders until physically threatened. The unfortunate colleague assigned to the task still does not know whether to laugh or cry about his joke. Irving succumbed entirely. He went under. Not that this was all. Whole classes of chattering students

periodically stamped into the office for appointments with Irving, but Irving was usually elsewhere, on his way to Spuyten Duyvil, where Dutchmen once bowled on the green, crossing Washington Square, bound for an obscure shop on East Canal Street—in search of what? That is the thing about Irving. A sepulchral peering figure. He seemed to commune with a world we at best only suspect, certainly never believe, and sometimes, rarely and without knowing, touch. It's a ridiculous statement, but there it is. I believe it. I should never be surprised to see Irving anywhere, and I am often aware that I am looking for Irving as I travel around the city, expecting, even wanting, him suddenly to appear. At first I saw him often. He haunted me. Now it has been more than five years. Recently I thought I'd get a dog, but I gave up the idea. I suddenly felt a terrible emptiness in me. I knew that one night while I was walking it, Irving would appear like a specter. And I would be inadequate to the moment. Sometimes I have dim visions of Irving—Irvig caught with his ancient book bag full of stolen books, Irving amorous (what does he whisper?), Irving the victim of anti-Semites (utterly blind without his glasses!). Sometimes I think Irving could not have been real. He was so ugly, so frail, the most charming fellow you would want to meet. Foolishly, I feel a little less human since Irving went away. But I don't really know what I would say should I meet him. I suspect now I would go right by. He'd never see me. Isn't that the way it is?

Stories

Glen Baxter

MURAIINE

After the fanfare of card tubes and broken tubes came the inevitable deluge of fall pies and the burning petals. The Mexican movie flickered here and the action became too faint to realize, but a wall beginning the chase through the hinterland set the tone for the afternoon. Ships bells sounded; cannons roared; choirs sang: the phonetic season was under way. A system of ropes and pulleys lowered the leading actors into view. Tarzan and Jane, serious but not yet desperate enough began the proceedings as a bank clerk wrapped in blue rags, a faltering impersonation but one which never failed to win them a place in the hearts of the seething mass of spectators. Next a bone came on stage and ate a three course meal. The audience went wild, throwing hats and even chairs high in the air. A volcano followed, a husband and wife duo who executed some delicate foot manoeuvres against a series of moving backcloths. The finale was a dreary affair lasting some two hours involving long tracking shots of a caravan moving slowly across a vast colorless plain of dry dirt. As the last feet of celluloid rolled from the creaking cogs another fanfare sounded. The proprietor jumped up on the stage and began waving his arms. The open auditorium fell into silence. He stepped closer to the microphone and began to spread his lips leaving a long narrow opening. He pressed the front of his tongue against the hard palate, at the same time gesticulating wildly with his arms. The sound emitted resembled the sound of "ee" in "seen" but he pronounced it with such emphasis that people sitting in seats near the stage clasped their hands to their ears shouting out "Stop! Stop!"

PORTIONS

Out on the plaza's lozenge Momma's kitchen commanded a fine view—spires, domes, towers and irregular columns of gray and green—filling her horizons. Slavishly exploring the avenues of a culinary technique adopted many years before she would rarely leave the condensed-moisture walls of her L-shaped moisture-condensed kitchen. Only on occasions when she sought to involve our interests would she enter the chain of our inner rooms to announce her plans for the afternoon. Top of the list was a selection of her own favorites—fine pastry blizzards which though spectacular in themselves served here only to herald the arrival of our individual shooting stars—a centerpiece of sugar-coated bread in the form of a star held aloft on crisscross strands of marzipan baked in syrup. Later on in the evening bone-carved duplicates would be committed to the shelves of family mementoes. A song invariably accompanied the presentation of each piece, Momma taking the soprano lead whilst we followed in unison with an amateurish descant which was silenced by the simultaneous pressing of pastry figs to our lips as Momma, dropping her voice an octave brought on the next course with her customary flourish.

On reaching the final course—a variation of burnt fruits studded in a white cake—our voices were wobbling from one note to another, barely scraping the top A we had reached earlier. Momma seemed to take strength from our lapse and her voice would soar even higher, filling the whole room with a resonance that threatened at any moment to shatter the thin delicate walls of her exquisite “meringue tears.”

Lou Reed

The Murder Mystery

A

1. denigrate obtuse and active verbs pronouns
skewer the sieve of the optical sewer
release the handle that holds all the gates up
puncture the eyeballs that seep all the muck up
read all the books and the people worth reading
and still see the muck on the sky of the ceiling

2. relent and obverse and inverse and perverse
and reverse the inverse of perverse and reverse
and reverse and reverse and reverse and chop it
and pluck it and cut it and spit it and sew it
to joy on the edge of a cyclop and spinet
to rage on the edge of a cylindrical minute

3. Tantalize poets with visions of grandeur
as their faces turn blue with the reek of the compost
as the living try hard to retain what the dead lost
with the double dead sickness from writing at what cost
and business and business and reverse and reverse
and set the brain reeling the inverse and inverse

4. with cheap simian melodies hillbilly outgush
for illiterate ramblings, for cheap understandings
the compost the reverse the obtuse and stupid
and business and business and cheap stupid lyrics
and simple mass reverse while the real thing is dying

5. jumpsuit and pigmeat and making his fortune
while making them happy with the inverse and obverse
and making them happy and making them happy
with the cloy and the stupid just another dumb lackey
who puts out the one thing while singing the other
but the real things alone and it is no man's brother

B

1. Candy screen wrappers of silk screen fantastic
lurid and lovely with twilight of ages
laconic giggles, ennui for the passions
rectify moments most serious and urgent
requiring replies most facile and vacuous
on a subject of great concern, noble origin—

2. for screeching and yelling and various offenses
against the state the country and the committee
for groveling and spewing and various offenses
the inverse the obverse the converse and reverse
and suitable reckonings too numerous to mention
it is heretofore, heretothree, forthleft forthrightly stated—

3. Rembrandt and Oswald and peanuts and ketchup
up to the stand with your feet on the Bible
do you swear to ketchup and throw up and up up
excuse me to willow and wander dark wonders
the fate of a nation rests hard on your bosom
and set the tongue squealing, the reverse and reverse

4. contempt contempt and contempt for the boredom
for cordless and Harry and Apepig and scissor
for children and adults all those under ninety
a stray in this fray is no condom worth saving
no dimple crass inverse can make lying worth dying

5. off with his head, take his head from his neck off
Put out his eyes and then cut his nose off
scoop out his brain put a string where his ears were
and swing the whole mess from the end of a wire
the wire extend from the tip of a rose
which will retain the remnants of what once was a nose

6. oh not to be whistled or studied or hummed
or remembered at nights when the eye is alone
but to skewer and ravage and savage and split
with the grace of a diamond and bellicose wit
to stun and to stagger with words of such stone
that those who do hear cannot again return home

7. contempt contempt and contempt for the seething
for writhing and reeling and two bit reportage
for sick with the body and sinister holy
the drowned burst blue babies now dead on the seashore
the valorous horseman who hand from the ceiling
the pig on the carpet the dusty pale jissom
that has no effect for the sick with the seasaw
the inverse obverse converse reverse of inverse
the diverse and converse of reverse and perverse
and sweet pyrotechnics and lets have another
of inverse converse diverse perverse and reverse
hells graveyard is damned as they chew on their brains
the slick and the scum reverse inverse and perverse

AA

1. Please raise the flag
rosy red carpet envy
English used here
this messenger is nervous
it's no fun at all
out here in the hall

2. Put down that rag
simpering callow and morose
If i knew then i could get out
the murder you see
is a mystery to me

6. Casbah and cascade and rosehip and feeling
cascade and cyanide Rachmaninoff Beethoven
skull silly wagons and justice and perverse
and reverse the inverse of inverse and inverse
bluebelly catalogue questionable earnings
Point of Order return the kings here to the ceiling

7. sickleaf and sorrow and pincers not scissors
regard and refrain from the daughters of marriage
regards from the elders and youngest in carriage
regard and regard from the inverse and perverse
and obverse and diverse of reverse and reverse
regard from the sick the dumb and the camel
from hump storing water, like brain is to marrow
to xray and filthy and cutting and peeling
to skin and to skin and to bone and to structure
to living and pallid and turgid and structured
and structured and structured and structured and structured
and regard and refrain and regard and refrain
the sick and the dumb inverse reverse and perverse

BB

1. Mister Moonlight
succulent smooth and gorgeous
isn't it nice
we're number one and so forth
isn't it sweet, being unique

2. Mister Muse
fellow of wit and gentry
medieval ruse
filling the shallow and empty
fools that dual, dual in pools

3. Objection! Suffice
Apelike and tactile bassoon
oboing me, cordon that virus' section
off—to the left
is what is not right

4. Exit the pig
enter the owl and gorgeous
king on the left,
it on the right and primping
adjusting his nose
as he reads from his scrolls

5. no one nose
no nose is good news and sceneless
extend the wine
drink here a toast to something
ten year old port is perfect in court

6. Razzanatazz
there's nothing up my shoulder
lust is a must
shaving my heads made me bolder
will you kindly read
what it was i brought three?

C

sick upon the staircase
sick upon the carpet
blood upon the pillow
climbing to the parapet

see the church bells gleaming
knife that scrapes a sick plate
dentures full of airholes
the tailor couldn't mend straight

3. English arcane
tantamount here to frenzy
passing for me
lascivious elder passion
corpulent filth, disguised as silk

4. Folksy Knockwurst
peel back the skin of french and
what do you find
follicles intertwining
succulent prose, wrapped up in rolls

5. Safety is nice
not an unwise word spoken
scary *bad dreams*
made safe and lovely songs
no doom or gloom
allowed in this room

6. Hello to Ray
Hello Gidiva and Angel
who let you in?
isn't it nice the party
aren't the lights, pretty at night

CC

plowing while it's done away
dumb and ready pigmeat
sick upon the carpet
climb into the casket
safe within the parapet
sackets in the parapet
pigs are out and growling
slaughter by the scashore
see the lifeguard drowning

shoot her full of airholes
climbing up the casket
take me to the casket
teeth upon her red throat
screw me in the daisies
rip apart her holler
snip the seas fantastic
treat her like a sailor
full and free and nervous
out to make his fortune
either this or that way
sickly or in good health
piss upon a building
like a dog in training
teach to heel or holler
yodel on a sing song
down upon the carpet
tickle polyester
sick within the parapet
screwing for a dollar
sucking on a firehose
chewing on a rubber line
tied to chair and rarebits
pay another player
Oh your such a good lad
here's another dollar
tie him to the bedpost
sick with witches covens
craving for raw meat
bones upon the metal
sick upon the circle
down upon the carpet
down below the parapet
waiting for your bidding
Pig upon the carpet
tumescent railroad
neuro-anesthesia analog
ready for a good look
drooling at the birches
swinging from the birches
succulent Nebraska

sea is full of fishes
fishes full of china
China plates are falling
all fall down
sick and shimmy carpet
rise before my eyes eyes
lead me to the ceiling
walk upon the wall wall
tender as the green grass
drink the whiskey horror
see the young girls dancing
flies upon the beaches
beaches are for sailors
nuns across the sea wall
black hood horseman raging
swordsmen eating fire
fire on the carpet
set the house a blazing
seize and bring it flaming
gently to the ground ground
dizzy bell Miss Fortune
fat and full of love juice
drip it on the carpet
down below the firehose
weep and whiskey fortune
sail me to the moon dear
drunk and dungeon sailors
headless Roman horsemen
The King and Queen are empty
their heads are in the outhouse
fish upon the water
bowl upon the savior
toothless wigged laureate
plain of bull and fancy
name upon a letter head
impressing all the wheat germ
love you for a nickel
maul you for a quarter
set the casket flaming
do not go gentle blazing

Aram Saroyan

You
and
me

and
baby
makes

three.

I talk
to hear
you talk.

You talk
to hear
me talk.

the rain
comes down

•

too
hot to
wear shoes

little
is what
she is

•

delicate
little
dogs

John Thorpe

I Just Lost My Tension Again

I walk around with no ideals or goals. I pass ripe blackberry bushes.

There's a man in me who would prove. He is right but little else. My knowledge of people was built up somewhere else. It was a heavy-handed preparation and it dies hard.

I blew money. I lost things. I got over the loud thing for awhile. Loud or quiet is about the same. It means you don't have anything to come on to people with. And you have to give up first.

I feel like everyone knows but me. I just sit there open-mouthed.

Yesterday I watched heavily environmental faces: half-closed faces with smiles that carry into the skull.

There are the people to hold in my arms. There is the street.

There's a laugh which indicates simply I drink and I'm too afraid to pay attention.

Then there's a lupine bush. It's somehow the fact I don't move alone.

My boots are starting to wear down on the side, they're lopsided so the heel juts out. It's the inhibition or physical flaw I feel before I hear talk.

I did very little. I had a central character by virtue of that. Not as if I'd found a place they couldn't take away.

I did what I wanted. And I brought two children into this world. I respected the mystery and mastered nothing I'm aware of.

I squat here, looking at the moon, deciding to appear.

The System

John Ashbery

The system was breaking down. The one who had wandered alone past so many happenings and events began to feel, backing up along the primal vein that led to his center, the beginning of a hiccup that would, if left to gather, explode the center to the extremities of life, the suburbs through which one makes one's way to where the country is.

At this time of life whatever being there is is doing a lot of listening, as though to the feeling of the wind before it starts, and it slides down this anticipation of itself, already full-fledged, a lightning existence that has come into our own. The trees and the streets are there merely to divide it up, to prevent it from getting all over itself, from retreating into itself instead of logically unshuffling into this morning that had to be, of the day of temptation. It is with some playfulness that we actually sit down to the business of mastering the many pauses and the abrupt, sharp accretions of regular being in the clotted sphere of today's activities. As though this were just any old day. There is no need for setting out, to advertise one's desti-

nation. All the facts are here and it remains only to use them in the right combinations, but that building will be the size of today, the rooms habitable and leading into one another in a lasting sequence, eternal and of the greatest timeliness.

It is all that. But there was time for others, that were to have got under way, sequences that now can exist only in memory, for there were other times for them. Yet they really existed. For instance a jagged kind of mood that comes at the end of the day, lifting life into the truth of real pain for a few moments before subsiding in the usual irregular way, as things do. These were as much there as anything, things to be fumbled with, cringed before: dry churrings of no timbre, hysterical staccato passages that one cannot master or turn away from. These things led into life. Now they are gone but it remains, calm, lucid, but weightless, drifting above everything and everybody like a light in the sky, no more to be surmised, only remembered as so many things that remain at equal distances from us are remembered. The light drinks the dark and sinks down, not on top of us as we had expected but far, far from us in some other, unrelated sphere. This was not even the life that was going to happen to us.

It was different in those days, though. Men felt things differently and their reactions were different. It was all life, this truth, you forgot about it and it was there. No need to collect your thoughts at every moment before putting forth a hesitant feeler into the rank and file of their sensations: the truth was obstinately itself, so much so that it always seemed about to harden and shrink, to grow hard and dark and vanish into itself anxiously but stubbornly, but this was just the other side of the coin of its intense conviction. It really knew what it *was*. Meanwhile the life uncurled around it in calm waves, unimpressed by the severity and yet not paying much mind, also very much itself. It seemed as though innumerable transparent tissues hovered around these two entities and joined them in

some way, and yet when one looked there was nothing special to be seen, only miles and miles of buoyancy, the way the mild blue sky of a summer afternoon seems to support a distant soaring bird. This was the outside reality. Inside there was like a bare room, or an alphabet, an alphabet of clemency. Now at last you knew what you were supposed to know. The words formed from it and the sentences formed from them were dry and clear, as though made of wood. There wasn't too much of any one thing. The feelings never wandered off into a private song or tried to present the procession of straightforward facts as something like a pageant: the gorgeous was still unknown. There was, however, a residue, a kind of fiction that developed parallel to the classic truths of daily life (as it was in that heroic but commonplace age) as they unfolded with the foreseeable majesty of a holocaust, an unfrightening one, and went unrecognized, drawing force and grandeur from this like the illegitimate offspring of a king. It is this "other tradition" which we propose to explore. The facts of history have been too well rehearsed (I'm speaking needless to say not of written history but the oral kind that goes on in you without your having to do anything about it) to require further elucidation here. But the other, unrelated happenings that form a kind of sequence of fantastic reflections as they succeed each other at a pace and according to an inner necessity of their own—these, I say, have hardly ever been looked at from a vantage point other than the historian's and an arcane historian's at that. The living aspect of these obscure phenomena has never to my knowledge been examined from a point of view like the painter's: in the round, bathed in a sufficient flow of overhead light, with "all its imperfections on its head" and yet without prejudice of the exaggerations either of the anathematist or the eulogist: quietly, in short, and I hope succinctly. Judged from this angle the whole affair will, I think, partake of and benefit from the enthusiasm not of the religious fanatic but of the average, open-minded, intelligent person who has never interested himself before in these matters either from not having had the leisure to do so or from ignorance of their existence.

From the outset it was apparent that someone had played a colossal trick on something. The switches had been tripped, as it were; the entire world or one's limited but accurate idea of it was bathed in glowing love, of a sort that need never have come into being but was now indispensable as air is to living creatures. It filled up the whole universe, raising the temperature of all things. Not an atom but did not feel obscurely compelled to set out in search of a mate; not a living creature, no insect or rodent, that didn't feel the obscure twitchings of dormant love, that didn't ache to join in the universal turmoil and hullabaloo that fell over the earth, roiling the clear waters of the reflective intellect, getting it into all kinds of messes that could have been avoided if only, as Pascal says, we had the sense to stay in our room, but the individual will condemns this notion and sallies forth full of ardor and *hubris*, bent on self-discovery in the guise of an attractive partner who is *the* heaven-sent one, the convex one with whom he has had the urge to mate all these seasons without realizing it. Thus a state of positively sinful disquiet began to prevail wherein men's eyes could be averted from the truth by the passing of a romantic stranger whose perfume set in motion all kinds of idle and frivolous trains of thought leading who knows where—to hell, most likely, or at very best to a position of blankness and ill-conceived repose on the edge of the flood, so that looking down into it one no longer saw the comforting reflection of one's own face and felt secure in the knowledge that, whatever the outcome, the struggle was going on in the arena of one's own breast. The bases for true reflective thinking had been annihilated by the scourge, and at the same time there was the undeniable fact of exaltation on many fronts, of a sense of holiness growing up through the many kinds of passion like a tree with branches bearing candelabra higher and higher up until they almost vanish from sight and are confused with the stars whose earthly avatars they are: the celestial promise of delights to come in another world and still lovely to look at in this one. Thus, in a half-baked kind of way, this cosmic welter of attractions was coming to stand for the real thing, which has to be colorless and featureless if it is to be the true

reflection of the primeval energy from which it issued forth, once a salient force capable of assuming the shape of any of the great impulses struggling to accomplish the universal task, but now bogged down in a single aspect of these to the detriment of the others, which begin to dwindle, jejune, etiolated, as though not really essential, as though someone had devised them for the mere pleasure of complicating the already complicated texture of the byways and torments through which we have to stray, plagued by thorns, chased by wild beasts, as though it were not commonly known from the beginning that not one of these tendrils of the tree of humanity could be bruised without endangering the whole vast waving mass; that that gorgeous, motley organism would tumble or die out unless each particle of its well-being were conserved as precious as the *idea of the whole*. For universal love is as special an aspect as carnal love or any of the other kinds: all forms of mental and spiritual activity must be practiced and encouraged equally if the whole affair is to prosper. There is no cutting corners where the life of the soul is concerned, even if a too modest approximation of the wish that caused it to begin to want to flower be the result—a result that could look like over-pruning to the untrained eye. Thus it was that a kind of blight fell on these early forms of going forth and being together, an anarchy of the affections sprung from too much universal cohesion.

Yet so blind are we to the true nature of reality at any given moment that this chaos—bathed, it is true, in the iridescent hues of the rainbow and clothed in an endless confusion of fair and variegated forms which did their best to stifle any burgeoning notions of the formlessness of the whole, the muddle really as ugly as sin which at every moment shone through the colored masses, bringing a telltale finger squarely down on the addition line, beneath which these self-important and self-convoluted shapes added disconcertingly up to zero—this chaos began to seem like the normal way of being, so that some time later even very sensitive and perceptive souls had been taken in: it was for them life's rolling river, with its calm

eddies and shallows as well as its more swiftly moving parts and ahead of these the rapids, with an awful roar somewhere in the distance; and yet, or so it seemed to these more sensible than average folk, a certain amount of hardship has to be accepted if we want the river-journey to continue; life cannot be a series of totally pleasant events, and we must accept the bad if we also wish the good; indeed a certain amount of evil is necessary to set it in the proper relief: how could we know the good without some experience of its opposite? And so these souls took over and dictated to the obscurer masses that follow in the wake of the discoverers. The way was picturesque and even came to seem carefully thought out; controls were waiting, in case things got out of hand, to restore the inevitable balance of happiness and woe; meanwhile the latter kept gradually diminishing whenever its turn came round and one really felt that one had set one's foot on the upward path, the spiral leading from the motley darkened and lightened landscape here below to the transparent veils of heaven. All that was necessary were patience and humbleness in recognizing one's errors, so as to be sure of starting out from the right place the next time, and so a sense of steady advancement came to reward one's efforts each time it seemed that one had been traveling too long without a view of the sun. And even in darkest night this sense of advancement came to whisper at one's side like a fellow-traveler pointing the way.

Things had endured this way for some time, so that it began to seem as though some permanent way of life had installed itself, a stability immune to the fluctuations of other eras: the pendulum that throughout eternity has swung successively toward joy and grief had been stilled by a magic hand. Thus for the first time it seemed possible to consider ways toward a more fruitful and harmonious manner of living, without the fear of an adverse fate's coming to reduce one's efforts to nothing so soon as undertaken. And yet it seemed to those living as though even this state had endured for a considerable length of time. No one had anything against it, and most reveled in

the creative possibilities its freedom offered, yet to all it seemed as though a major development had been holding off quite a while and that its effects were on the verge of being felt, if only the present could give a slight push into the haphazard field of potentiality that lay stretched all around like a meadow full of wild flowers whose delightful promise lies so apparent that all question of entry into it and enjoyment is suspended for the moment. Hence certain younger spectators felt that all had already come to an end, that the progress toward infinity had crystallized in them, that they in fact were the other they had been awaiting, and that any look outward over the mild shoals of possibilities that lay strewn about as far as the eye could see was as gazing into a mirror reflecting the innermost depths of the soul.

Who has seen the wind? Yet it was precisely this that these enterprising but deluded young people were asking themselves. They were correct in assuming that the whole question of behavior in life has to be rethought each second; that not a breath can be drawn nor a footstep taken without our being forced in some way to reassess the age-old problem of what we are to do here and how did we get here, taking into account our relations with those about us and with ourselves, and the ever-present issue of our eternal salvation, which looms larger at every moment—even when forgotten it seems to grow like the outline of a mountain as one approaches it. To be always conscious of these multiple facets is to incarnate a dimensionless organism like the wind's, a living concern that can know no rest, by definition: it *is* restlessness. But this condition of eternal vigilance had been accepted with the understanding that somehow it would also mirror the peace that all awaited so impatiently: it could not proceed unless the generalized shape of this nirvana-like state could impose its form on the continually active atoms of the moving forward which was the price it exacted: hence a dilemma for any but the unrepentant hedonists or on the contrary those who chose to remain all day on the dung-heap, rending their hair and

clothing and speaking of sackcloth and ashes: these, by far the noisiest group, made the least impression as usual, yet the very fact that they existed pointed to what seemed to be a tragic flaw in the system's structure; for among penance or perpetual feasting or the draconian requirements of a conscience eternally mobilized against itself, feeding on itself in order to re-create itself in a shape that the next instant would destroy, how was one to choose? So that those who assumed that they had reached the end of an elaborate but basically simple progression, the logical last step of history, came more and more to be the dominant party: a motley group but with many level heads among them, whose voices chanting the wise maxims of regular power gradually approached the point of submerging the other cacophany of tinkling cymbals and wailing and individual voices raised in solemn but unreal debate. This was the logical cutting-off place, then: ahead might lie new forms of life, some of them beautiful perhaps, but the point was that the effort of establishing them or anything else that was to come had ended here: a permanent now had taken over and was free to recast the old forms, riddles that had been expected to last until the Day of Judgment, as it saw fit, in whatever shape seemed expedient for lasting the next few crucial moments into a future without controls.

It seemed, just for a moment, that a new point had now been reached. It was not the time for digressions yet it made them inevitable, like a curtain at the end of an act. It brought you to a pass where turning back was unthinkable, and where further progress was possible only after it had been discussed at length, but which also outlawed discussion. Life became a pregnant silence, but it was understood that the silence was to lead nowhere. It became impossible to breathe easily in this constricted atmosphere. We ate little, for it seemed that in this way we could produce the inner emptiness from which alone understanding can spring up, the tree of contradictions, joyous and living, investing that hollow void with its complicated material self. At this time we were surrounded by old

things, such as need not be questioned but which distill the meek information that is within them like a perfume on the air, to be used and disposed of; and also by certain new things which wear their newness like a quality, perhaps as an endorsement of the present, in all events as a vote of confidence in the currency of the just-created as a common language available to all men of good will, however disturbing the times themselves might turn out to be. Gradually one grew less aware of the idea of not turning back imposed as a condition for progress, as one imbibed the magic present that drew everything—the old and the new—along in the net of its infectious charm. Surely it would be possible to profit from the options of this cooperative new climate as though they were a charter instead of a vague sense of well-being, like a mild day in early spring, ready to be dashed to pieces by the first seasonable drop in temperature. And meanwhile there was a great sense of each one's going about his business, quiet in the elation of that accomplishment, as though it were enough to set one's foot on a certain path to be guaranteed of arriving at some destination. Yet the destinations were few. What actually was *wanted* from this constructive feeling? A "house by the side of the road" in which one could stay indefinitely, arranging new opportunities and fixing up old ones so that they mingled in a harmonious mass that could be called living with a sense of purpose? No, what was wanted and was precisely lacking in this gay and salubrious desert was an end to the "end" theory whereby each man was both an idol and the humblest of idolaters, in other words the antipodes of his own universe, his own redemption or his own damnation, with the rest of the world as a painted backdrop to his own monodrama of becoming of which he was the lone impassioned spectator. But the world avenges itself on those who would lose it by skipping over the due process of elimination, from whatever altruistic motive, by incrusting itself so thoroughly in these efforts at self-renewal that no amount of wriggling can dislodge its positive or negative image from all that is contemplated of present potentialities or the great sane simplifications to come. So that it was all lost, or rather all in the shade that in-

stills weariness and sickness into the limbs under the guise of enraptured satiety. There was, again, no place to go, that is, no place that would not make a mockery of the place already left, casting all progress forward into the confusion of an eternally misapplied present. This was the stage to which reason and intuition working so well together had brought us, but it was scarcely their fault if now fear at the longest shadows of approaching darkness began to prompt thoughts of stopping somewhere for the night, as well as a serious doubt that any such place existed on the face of the earth.

On this Sunday which is also the last day of January let us pause for a moment to take note of where we are. A new year has just begun and now a new month is coming up, charged with its weight of promise and probable disappointments, standing in the wings like an actor who is conscious of nothing but the anticipated cue, totally absorbed, a pillar of waiting. And now there is no help for it but to be cast adrift in the new month. One is plucked from one month to the next; the year is like a fast-moving Ferris wheel; tomorrow all the riders will be under the sign of February and there is no appeal, one will have to get used to living with its qualities and perhaps one will even adjust to them successfully before the next month arrives with a whole string of new implications in its wake. Just to live this way is impossibly difficult, but the strange thing is that no one seems to notice it; people sail along quite comfortably and actually seem to enjoy the way the year progresses, and they manage to fill its widening space with multiple activities which apparently mean a lot to them. Of course some are sadder than the others but it doesn't seem to be because of the dictatorship of the months and years, and it goes away after a while. But the few who want order in their lives and a sense of growing and progression toward a fixed end suffer terribly. Sometimes they try to dope their consciousness of the shifting but ineluctable grid of time that has been arbitrarily imposed on them with alcohol or drugs, but these lead merely to mornings after whose waking is ten times

more painful than before, bringing with it a new and more terrible realization of the impossibility of reconciling their own ends with those of the cosmos. If by chance you should be diverted or distracted for a moment from awareness of your imprisonment by some pleasant or interesting occurrence, there is always the shape of the individual day to remind you. It is a microcosm of man's life as it gently wanes, its long morning shadows getting shorter with the approach of noon, the high point of the day which could be likened to that sudden tremendous moment of intuition that comes only once in a lifetime, and then the fuller, more rounded shapes of early afternoon as the sun imperceptibly sinks in the sky and the shadows start to lengthen, until all are blotted in the stealthy coming of twilight, merciful in one sense that it hides the differences, blemishes as well as beauty marks, that gave the day its character and in so doing caused it to be another day in our limited span of days, the reminder that time is moving on and we are getting older, not older enough to make any difference on this particular occasion, but older all the same. Even now the sun is dropping below the horizon; a few moments ago it was still light enough to read but now it is no more, the printed characters swarm over the page to create an impressionistic blur. Soon the page itself will be invisible. Yet one has no urge to get up and put on a light; it is enough to be sitting here, grateful for the reminder that yet another day has come and gone, and you have done nothing about it. What about the morning resolutions to convert all the confused details in the air about you into a column of intelligible figures? To draw up a balance sheet? This naturally went undone, and you are perhaps grateful also for your laziness, glad that it has brought you to this pass where you must now face up to the day's inexorable end as indeed we must all face up to death some day, and put our faith in some superior power which will carry us beyond into a region of light and timelessness. Even if we had done the things we ought to have done it probably wouldn't have mattered anyway as everyone always leaves something undone and this can be just as ruinous as a whole life of crime or dissipation. Yes, in the long run there is some-

thing to be said for these shiftless days, each distilling its drop of poison until the cup is full; there is something to be said for them because there is no escaping them.

On the streets, in private places, they have no idea of the importance of these things. This exists only in our own minds, that is not in any place, nowhere. Possibly then it does not exist. Even its details are hazardous to consider. Most people would not consider it in its details, because (a) they would argue that details, no matter how complete, can give no adequate idea of the whole, and (b), because the details can too easily become fetishes, i.e., become prized for themselves, with no notion of the whole of which they were a part, with only an idolatrous understanding of the qualities of the particular detail. Certainly even this limited understanding can lead to a conception of beauty, in so far as any detail is a microcosm of the whole, as is so often the case. Thus you find people whose perfect understanding of love is deduced from lust, as the description of a flower can generate an idea of what it looks like. It is even possible that this irregular but satisfying understanding is the only one really allotted to us; that knowledge of the whole is impossible or at least so impractical as to be rarely or never feasible; that as we are born among imperfections we are indeed obligated to use them toward an assimilation of the imperfections that we are and the greater ones that we are to become; that not to do so would be to sin against nature, that is to end up with nothing, not even the reassuring knowledge that we sinned to some purpose, but are instead empty and blameless as an inanimate object. Yet we know not what we are to become, therefore we can never completely rule out the possibility of intellectual understanding, even though it seems nothing but a snare and a delusion; we might miss out on everything by ignoring its call to order, which is in fact audible to each of us; therefore how can we decide? It is no solution either to combine the two approaches, to borrow from right reason or sensory data as the case seems to warrant, for an amalgam is not completeness either, and in-

deed is far less likely to be so through an error in dosage. So of the three methods: reason, sense, or a knowing combination of both, the last seems the least like a winner, the second problematic; only the first has some slim chance of succeeding through sheer perversity, which is possibly the only way to succeed at all. Thus we may be spared at least the agonizing wading through a slew of details of theories of action at the risk of getting hopelessly bogged down in them: better the erratic approach, which wins all or at least loses nothing, than the cautious semifailure; better Don Quixote and his windmills than all the Sancho Panzas in the world; and may it not eventually turn out that to risk all is to win all, even at the expense of intimate, visceral knowledge of the truth, of its graininess and contours, even though this approach leads despite its physicality to no practical understanding of the truth, no grasp of how to use it towards ends it never dreams of? This, then, is surely the way; but discovery of where it begins is another matter.

The great careers are like that: a slow burst that narrows to a final release, pointed but not acute, a life of suffering redeemed and annihilated at the end, and for what? For a casual moment of knowing that is here one minute and gone the next, almost before you were aware of it? Whole tribes of seekers of phenomena who mattered very much to themselves have gone up in smoke in the space of a few seconds, with less fuss than a shooting star. Is it then that our bodies combined in such a way as to show others that we really mean it to each other—is this really all we ever intended to do? Having been born with knowledge or at least with the capacity to judge, to spend all our time working toward a way to show off that knowledge, so as to be able to return to it at the end for what it is? Besides the obvious question of who knows whether it will still be there, there is the even more urgent one of whose life are we taking into our hands? Is there no way in which these things may be done for themselves, so that others may enjoy them? Already we have wandered far from the track and, as always

happens in such cases, darkness has fallen and it would be impossible to find one's way back without getting lost. Is this a reason to stay where we are, on the false assumption that we are less lost right here, and thus to complete the cycle of inertia that we began wrongly supposing that it would lead to knowledge? No, it is far better to continue on our way, even at the risk of getting more lost (an impossibility, of course). We might at least wind up with a knowledge of who *they* are, with whom we began, and at the very least with a new respect toward the others, reached through a more perfect understanding of ourselves and the true way. But still the "career" notion intervenes. It is impossible for us at the present time not to think of these people as separate entities, each with his development and aim to be achieved, careers which will "peak" after awhile and then go back to being ordinary lives that fade quite naturally into air as they are used up, and are as though they never were, except for the "lesson" which has added an iota to the sum of all human understanding. And this way of speaking has trapped each one of us.

An alternative way would be the "life-as-ritual" concept. According to this theory no looking back is possible, in itself a considerable advantage, and the stages of the ritual are each considered in themselves, for themselves, but here no danger of fetichism is possible because all contact with the past has been severed. Fetichism comes into being only when there is a past that may seem more or less attractive when compared with the present; the resulting inequality causes a rush toward the immediate object of contemplation, hardens it into a husk around its own being, which promptly ceases. But the ritual approach provides some bad moments too. All its links severed with the worldly matrix from which it sprang, the soul feels that it is propelling itself forward at an ever-increasing speed. This very speed becomes a source of intoxication and of more gradually accruing speed; in the end the soul cannot recognize itself and is as one lost, though it imagines it has found eternal rest. But the true harmony which would render this peace in-

teresting is lacking. There is only a cold knowledge of goodness and nakedness radiating out in every direction like the spines of the horse chestnut; mere knowledge and experience without the visual irregularities, those celestial motes in the eye that alone can transform ecstasy into a particular state beyond the dearly won generality. Here again, if backward looks were possible, not nostalgia but a series of carefully selected views, hieratic as icons, the difficulty would be eased and self could merge with selflessness, in a true appreciation of the tremendous volumes of eternity. But this is impossible because the ritual is by definition something impersonal, and can only move further in that direction. It was born without a knowledge of the past. And any attempt to hybridize it can only result in destruction and even death.

In addition to these twin notions of growth, two kinds of happiness are possible: the frontal and the latent. The first occurs naturally throughout life; it is experienced as a kind of sense of immediacy, even urgency; often we first become aware of it at a moment when we feel we need outside help. Its sudden balm suffuses the soul without warning, as a kind of bloom or grace. We suppose that souls "in glory" feel this way permanently, as a day-to-day condition of being: yes, as a condition, for it is both more and less than a state; it exacts certain prerequisites and then it builds on these, but the foundation is never forgotten; it is the foundation that is happiness. And as it exacts, so it bestows. There is not the mindlessness, no idea of eternal lassitude permeated with the light of the firmament or whatever; there are only the value-judgments of truth, exposed one after another like colored slides on the white wall that is the naked soul, or a kind of hard glaze that permanently transforms the ordinary clay of the soul into an object of beauty by obliterating the knowledge of what lies underneath. This is what we are all hoping for, yet we know that very few among us will ever achieve it; those that do will succeed less through their own efforts than through the obscure workings of grace as chance, so that although we would

be very glad to have the experience of this sudden opening up, this inundation which shall last an eternity, we do not bother our heads too much about it, so distant and far away it seems, like those beautiful mosaic ceilings representing heaven which we crane up at from below, knowing that we cannot get near enough for it to be legible but liking all the same the vastness and aura of the conception, glad to have seen it and to know it's there but nevertheless firmly passing outward into the sunlight after two or three turns around the majestic dim interior. This kind of beauty is almost too abstract to be experienced as beauty, and yet we must realize that it is not an abstract notion, that it really can happen at times and that life at these times seems marvelous. Indeed this is truly what we were brought into creation for, if not to experience it, at least to have the knowledge of it as an ideal toward which the whole universe tends and which therefore confers a shape on the random movements outside us—these are all straining in the same direction, toward the same goal, though it is certain that few if any of those we see now will attain it.

The second kind, the latent or dormant kind, is harder to understand. We all know those periods of balmy weather in early spring, sometimes even before spring has officially begun: days or even a few hours when the air seems suffused with an unearthly tenderness, as though love were about to start, now, at this moment, on an endless journey put off since the beginning of time. Just to walk a few steps in this romantic atmosphere is to experience a magical but quiescent bliss, as though the torch of life were about to be placed in one's hands: after having anticipated it for so long, what is one now to do? And so the happiness withholds itself, perhaps even indefinitely; it realizes that the vessel has not yet been fully prepared to receive it; it is afraid it will destroy the order of things by precipitating itself too soon. But this in turn quickens the dismay of the vessel or recipient; it, or we, have been waiting all our lives for this sign of fulfillment, now to be abruptly snatched away so soon as barely perceived. And

a kind of panic develops, which for many becomes a permanent state of being, with all the appearances of a calm, purposeful, reflective life. These people are awaiting the sign of their felicity without hope; its *nearness* is there, tingeing the air around them, in suspension, in escrow as it were, but they cannot get at it. Yet so great is their eagerness that they believe that they have already absorbed it, that they have attained that plane of final realization which we are all striving for, that they have achieved a state of permanent grace. Hence the air of joyful resignation, the beatific upturned eyelids, the paralyzed stance of these castaways of the eternal voyage, who imagine they have reached the promised land when in reality the ship is sinking under them. The great fright has turned their gaze upwards, to the stars, to the heavens; they see nothing of the disarray around them, their ears are closed to the cries of their fellow passengers; they can think only of themselves when all the time they believe that they are thinking of nothing but God. Yet in their innermost minds they know too that all is not well; that if it were there would not be this rigidity, with the eye and the mind focused on a nonexistent center, a fixed point, when the common sense of even an idiot would be enough to make him realize that nothing has stopped, that we and everything around us are moving forward continually, and that we are being modified constantly by the speed at which we travel and the regions through which we pass, so that merely to think of ourselves as having arrived at some final resting place is a contradiction of fundamental logic, since even the dullest of us knows enough to realize that he is ignorant of everything, including the basic issue of whether we are in fact moving at all or whether the concept of motion is something that can even be spoken of in connection with such ignorant beings as we, for whom the term ignorant is indeed perhaps an overstatement, implying as it does that something is known somewhere, whereas in reality we are not even sure of this: we in fact cannot aver with any degree of certainty that we *are* ignorant. Yet this is not so bad; we have at any rate kept our open-mindedness—*that*, at least, we may be sure that we have—and are not in any danger, or

so it seems, of freezing into the pious attitudes of those true spiritual bigots whose faces are turned toward eternity and who therefore can see nothing. We know that we are en route in a certain sense, and also that there has been a hitch somewhere: we have as it were boarded the train but for some unexplained reason it has not yet started. But there is in this as yet only slight delay matter for concern even for the likes of us, intelligent and only modestly expectant as we are, patient, meek without any overtones of ironic resignation before a situation we are powerless to change and secretly believe is likely to go from bad to worse. There is nothing of that in us, we are not bigots and we have kept an open mind, we have all our mobility in a word, yet we too sense a danger and we do not quite know how we are going to react. Those first few steps, in the prematurely mild air that a blizzard is surely destined to dash from living memory before tomorrow comes—aren't we in danger of accepting these only for what they are, of being thankful for them and letting our gratitude take the place of further inquiry into what they were like, of letting it stand both for our attitude as eternity will view it and also for the fulfillment of which this was just the promise? That surely is the danger we run in our state of sophisticated but innocent enlightenment: that of not *demanding* and getting a hearing, of not finding out where those steps were leading even in the teeth of an almost dead certainty that it was nowhere, even of doubting that they ever took place, that any kind of structure or fabric in which they would assume being could ever have existed. So that in our way we are worse off or at least in worse danger than those others who imagine themselves already delivered from the chain of rebirth. *They* have their illusions to sustain them, even though these are full of holes and sometimes don't prevent their possessors from feeling the chilly drafts of doubt, while we can be brought to doubt that any of this, which we know in our heart of hearts to be a real thing, an event of the highest spiritual magnitude, ever happened. Here it is that our sensuality can save us *in extremis*: the atmosphere of the day that event took place, the way the trees and buildings looked, what we

said to the person who was both the bearer and fellow-recipient of that message and what that person replied, words that were not words but sounds out of time, taken out of any eternal context in which their content would be recognizable—these facts have entered our consciousness once and for all, have spread through us even into our pores like a marvelous antidote to the cup that the next moment had already prepared and which, whether hemlock or nectar, could only have proved fatal because it *was* the next, bringing with it the unspoken message that motion could be accomplished only in time, that is in a preordained succession of moments which must carry us far from here, far from this impassive but real moment of understanding which may be the only one we shall ever know, even if it is merely the first of an implied infinite series. But what if this were all? What if it were true that “once is enough”? That all consequences, all resonances of this singular event were to be cut off by virtue of its very singularity; nay, that even for memory, insofar as it can profit anyone, this instant were to be as though it had never existed, expunged from the chronicles of recorded time, fallen lower than the last circle of hell into a pit of total negation, and all this in our own best interests, so that we might not be led astray into imagining its goodness infinitely extendible, a thing that could never happen given the absolute and all-pervading nature of that goodness, destined to occur only once in the not-to-be-repeated cycle of eternity? Yet this seems not quite right, a little too pat perhaps, and here again it is our senses that are of some use to us in distinguishing verity from falsehood. For they never would have been able to capture the emanations from that special point of life if they were not meant to do something with them, weave them into the pattern of the days that come after, sunlit or plunged in shadow as they may be, but each with the identifying scarlet thread that runs through the whole warp and woof of the design, sometimes almost disappearing in its dark accretions, but at others emerging as the full inspiration of the plan of the whole, grandly organizing its repeated vibrations and imposing its stamp on these until the meaning of it all sudden-

ly flashes out of the shimmering pools of scarlet like a vast and diaphanous though indestructible framework, not to be lost sight of again? And here we may say that even if the uniqueness were meant to last only the duration of its unique instant, which I don't for a moment believe, but let us assume so for the sake of argument—even if this were the case, its aura would still be meant to linger on in our days, informing us of and gently prodding us toward the right path, even though we might correctly consider ourselves shut off from the main source, never to be in a position to contemplate its rightness again, yet despite this able to consider its traces in the memory as a supreme good, as a god come down to earth to instruct us in the ways of the other kingdom, for he sees that we have not progressed very far on our own—no farther than those first few steps in the suddenly mild open air. And we are lucky that he chooses so to deal with us, for as of this moment our worries are over, we have only to step forward to be in the right path, we are all walking in it and we always have been, only we never knew it. The end is still shrouded in mystery, but the mystery diminishes without exactly becoming clearer the more we advance, like a city whose plan begins to take shape on the horizon as we approach it, yet that is not exactly the case here because we certainly perceive no more of the divine enigma as we progress, it is just that its mystery lessens and comes to seem, whenever we stop to think of it which is not very often, the least important feature of the whole. What does matter is our growing sense of certainty, whether deduced by the intellect or the sensual intelligence (this is immaterial): it is there, and this is all we need bother about, just as there is no need to examine a man's ancestry or antecedents in evaluating his personal qualities. But, after the question of how did it get there, which we now perceive to be futile, another question remains: how are we to use it? Not only by what means, which is an important enough consideration, but toward what end? Toward our own betterment and by extension that of the world around us or conversely toward the improvement of the world, which we might believe would incidentally render us as its citizens better people, even though

this were just a side effect? The answer is in our morning waking. For just as we begin our lives as mere babes with the imprint of nothing in our heads, except lingering traces of a previous existence which grow fainter and fainter as we progress until we have forgotten them entirely, only by this time other notions have imposed themselves so that our infant minds are never a complete *tabula rasa*, but there is always something fading out or just coming into focus, and this whatever-it-is is always projecting itself on us, escalating its troops, prying open the shut gates of our sensibility and pouring in to augment its forces that have begun to take over our naked consciousness and driving away those shreds of another consciousness (although not, perhaps, forever—nothing is permanent—but perhaps until our last days when their forces shall again mass on the borders of our field of perception to remind us of that other old existence which we are now called to rejoin) so that for a moment, between the fleeing and the pursuing armies there is almost a moment of peace, of purity in which what we are meant to perceive could almost take shape in the empty air, if only there were time enough, and yet in the time it takes to perceive the dimness of its outline we can if we are quick enough seize the meaning of that assurance, before returning to the business at hand—just, I say, as we begin each day in this state of threatened blankness which is wiped away so soon, but which leaves certain illegible traces, like chalk dust on a blackboard after it has been erased, so we must learn to recognize it as the form—the only one—in which such fragments of the true learning as we are destined to receive will be vouchsafed to us, if at all. The unsatisfactoriness, the frowns and squinting, the itching and scratching as you listen without taking in what is being said to you, or only in part, so that you cannot piece the argument together, should not be dismissed as signs of our chronic all-too-human weakness but welcomed and examined as signs of life in which part of the whole truth lies buried. And as the discourse continues and you think you are not getting anything out of it, as you yawn and rub your eyes and pick your nose or scratch your head, or nudge your neighbor on the

hard wooden bench, this knowledge is getting through to you, and taking just the forms it needs to impress itself upon you, the forms of your inattention and incapacity or unwillingness to understand. For it is certain that you will rise from the bench a new person, and even before you have emerged into the full daylight of the street you will feel that a change has begun to operate in you, within your very fibers and sinews, and when the light of the street floods over you it will have become real at last, all traces of doubt will have been pulverized by the influx of light slowly mounting to bury those crass seamarks of egocentricity and warped self-esteem you were able to navigate by but which you no longer need now that the rudder has been swept out of your hands, and this whole surface of daylight has become one with that other remembered picture of light, when you were setting out, and which you feared would disappear because of its uniqueness, only now realizing that this singleness was the other side of the coin of its many-faceted diversity and interest, and that it may be simultaneously cherished for the former and lived in thanks to the versatility of the latter. It may be eaten, and breathed, and it would indeed have no reason to exist if this were not the case. So I think that the question of how we are going to use the reality of our revelation, as well as to what end, has now been resolved. First of all we see that these two aspects of our question are actually one and the same, that there is only one aspect as well as only one question, that to wonder how is the same as beginning to know why. For no choice is possible. In the early moments of wondering after the revelation had been received it could have been that this way of doing seemed to promise more, that that one had already realized its potential, that therefore there was matter for hesitation and the possibility of loss between a way that had already proved itself and another, less sure one that could lead to greener pastures, to cloud-cuckoo land and even farther, just because the implied risk seemed to posit a greater virtue in the acceptance. But it is certain now that these two ways are the same, that we *have* them both, the risk and the security, merely through being human creatures subject to the vicissitudes of time, our earth-

ly lot. So that this second kind of happiness is merely a fleshed-out, realized version of that ideal first kind, and more to be prized because its now ripe contours enfold both the promise and the shame of our human state, which they therefore proceed to transmute into something that is an amalgam of both, the faithful reflection of the idealistic concept that got us started along this path, but a reflection which is truer than the original because more suited to us, and whose shining perspectives we can feel and hold, clenching the journey to us like the bread and meat left by the wayside for the fatigued traveler by an anonymous Good Samaritan—ourselves, perhaps, just as Hop-o'-My-Thumb distributed crumbs along the way to guide him back in the dark, only these the birds have miraculously spared: they are ours. To know this is to be able to relax without any danger of becoming stagnant. Thus the difficulty of living with the unfolding of the year is erased, the preparing for spring and then for the elusive peace of summer, followed by the invigorating readjustments of autumn and the difficult and never very successful business of adapting to winter and the approach of another year. This way we are automatically attuned to these progressions and can forget about them; what matters is us and not what time makes of us, or rather it is what we make of ourselves that matters. What is this? Just the absorption of ourselves seen from the outside, when it is really what is going on inside us—all this overheard chatter and speculation and the noises of the day as it wears on into the calm of night, joyful or abysmal as it may be: this doesn't matter once we have accepted it and taken it inside us to be the interior walls of our chamber, the place where we live. And so all these conflicting meaningless details are transformed into something peaceful that surrounds, like wallpaper that could be decorated with scenes of shipwrecks or military attributes or yawning crevasses in the earth and which doesn't matter, which indeed can paradoxically heighten the feeling of a peaceful domestic interior. Yet this space wasn't made just for the uses of peace, but also for action, for planned assaults on the iniquity and terror outside, though this doesn't mean either that we shall

have at some point to go outside or on the contrary that our plans will remain at the stage of dreams or armies in the fire: we carry both inside and outside around with us as we move purposefully toward an operation that is going to change us on every level, and is also going to alter the balance of power of happiness in the world in our favor and that of all the human beings in the world. And how is this to become possible? Let us assume for the sake of argument that the blizzard I spoke of earlier has occurred, shattering the frail décor of your happiness like a straw house, replunging you and your world into the grey oblivion you had been floundering in all your life until the day your happiness was given to you as a gift, a reward or so it seemed for the stale unprofitable journey you called your life, only now it seemed that it was just beginning, and at the same moment you had an impression of stopping or ending. Apparently then happiness was to be a fixed state, but then you perceived that it was both fixed and mobile at the same time, like a fixed source of light with rays running out from and connecting back to it. This suited you very well, because it replied to your twin urges to act and to remain at peace with yourself and with the warring elements outside. And now these have again taken over and crushed your fragile dream of happiness, so that it all seems meaningless. Gazing out at the distraught but inanimate world you feel that you have lapsed back into the normal way things are, that what you were feeling just now was a novelty and hence destined to disappear quickly, its sole purpose if any being to light up the gloom around you sufficiently for you to become aware of its awesome extent, more than the eye and the mind can take in. The temptation here is to resume the stoic pose, tinged with irony and self-mockery, of times before. There was no point in arriving at this place, but neither, you suppose, would there have been any in avoiding it. It is all the same to you. And you turn away from the window almost with a sense of relief, to bury yourself again in the task of sorting out the jumbled scrap basket of your recent days, without any hope of completing it or even caring whether it gets done or not. But you find that you are unable to pick up the threads where you left

off; the details of things shift and their edges swim before your tired eyes; it is impossible to make even the rudimentary sense of them that you once could. You see that you cannot do without it, that singular isolated moment that has now already slipped so far into the past that it seems a mere spark. You cannot do without it and you cannot have it. At this point a drowsiness overtakes you as of total fatigue and indifference; in this unnatural, dreamy state the objects you have been contemplating take on a life of their own, in and for themselves. It seems to you that you are eavesdropping and can understand their private language. They are not talking about you at all, but are telling each other curious private stories about things you can only half comprehend, and other things that have a meaning only for themselves and are beyond any kind of understanding. And these in turn would know other sets of objects, limited to their own perceptions and at the limit of the scope of visibility of those that discuss them and dream about them. It could be that time and space are filled up with these to infinity and beyond; that there is no such thing as a void, only endless lists of things that may or may not be aware of one another, the "sad variety of woe." And this pointless diversity plunges you into a numbing despair and blankness. The whole world seems dyed the same melancholy hue. Nothing in it can arouse your feelings. Even the sun seems dead. And all because you succumbed to what seemed an innocent and perfectly natural craving, to have your cake and eat it too, forgetting that, widespread as it is, it cannot be excused on any human grounds because it cannot be realized. Therefore even to contemplate it is a sin. But, you say, in those first moments... Never mind that now. You must forget them. The dream that was fleetingly revealed to you was a paradox, and for this reason must be forgotten as quickly as possible. But, you continue to argue, it mattered precisely because it was a paradox and about to be realized here on earth, in human terms; otherwise one would have forgotten it as quickly as any morning dream that clings to one in the first few waking moments, until its incongruities become blatant in the reasonable daylight that seeps back into your consciousness. It was not a case

of a spoiled child asking its mother for something for the nth time or of wishing on a star; it was a *new arrangement* that existed and was on the point of working. And now it is all the same; any miracles, if there ever are any again, will be partial ones, mere virtuosic exhibitions beside the incontrovertible reality of that other, as amazingly real as a new element or a new dimension. And so it goes. But if it was indeed as real as all that, then it *was* real, and therefore it *is* real. Just as matter cannot be added to or subtracted from the universe, or energy destroyed, so with something real, that is, real in the sense you understood it and understand it. When will you realize that your dreams have eternal life? I of course don't mean that you are a moonstruck dreamer, but that they do exist, outside of you, without your having to do anything about it. Even if you do something it won't matter. And it is possible that you will always remain unaware of their existence; this won't matter either, to them, that is. But you must try to seize the truth of this: whatever was, is, and must be. The darkness that surrounds you now does not exist because it never had any independent existence: you created it out of the spleen and torment you felt. It looks real enough to hide you from the light of the sun, but its reality is as specious as that of a mirage. The clouds are dispersing. And nothing comes to take their place, to interpose itself between you and the reality which you dreamed and which is therefore real. This new arrangement is already guiding your steps and indicating the direction you should take without your realizing it, for it is invisible now; it still seems that it is lost for there is of course no tangible evidence of it: *that* happens only once, it is true. But now to have absorbed the lesson, to have recovered from the shock of not being able to remember it, to again be setting out from the beginning—is this not something good to you? You no longer have to remember the principles, they seem to come to you like fragments of a buried language you once knew. You are like the prince in the fairy tale before whom the impenetrable forest opened and then the gates of the castle, without his knowing why. The one thing you want is to pause so as to puzzle all this out, but that is impossible; you are moving much

too quickly for your momentum to be halted. How will it all turn out? What will the end be? But these are questions of the ignorant novice that you have forgotten about already. You think now only in terms of the speed with which you advance, and which you drink in like oxygen; it has become the element in which you live and which is you. Nothing else matters.

And so, not bothering about anything, you again took things into your own hands. You were a little incredulous as to the outcome, but you decided to try it anyway. Who could tell what would happen? It didn't do to dwell too much on those ideal forms of happiness that had haunted you ever since the cradle and had now defined themselves almost in a paroxysm; they could be assigned to the corners and cubbyholes of your mind since it didn't matter whether they were in evidence as long as you never actually lost sight of them. What did matter now was getting down to business, or back to the business of day-to-day living with all the tiresome mechanical problems that this implies. And it was just here that philosophy broke down completely and was of no use. How to deal with the new situations that arise each day in bunches or clusters, and which resist categorization to the point where any rational attempt to deal with them is doomed from the start? And in particular how to deal with this one that faces you now, which has probably been with you always; now it has a different name and a different curriculum vitae; its qualities are combined in such a way as to seem different from all that has gone before, but actually it is the same old surprise that you have always lived with. Forget about the details of name and place, forget also the concepts and archetypes that haunt you and which are as much a part of the typical earthbound situation you find yourself in as those others; neither the concept nor the state of affairs logically deduced from it is going to be of much help to you now. What is required is the ability to enter into the complexities of the situation as though it really weren't new at all, which it isn't, as one takes the first few steps into a labyrinth. Here one abruptly finds one's intuition tailored to the

needs of the new demanding syndrome; each test is passed flawlessly, as though in a dream, and the complex climate that is formed by the vacillating wills and energies of the many who surround you becomes as easy as pie for you. You take on all comers but you do not advertise your presence. Right now it is important to slip as quickly as possible into the Gordian contours of the dank, barren morass (or so it seems at present) without uttering so much as a syllable; to live in that labyrinth that seems to be directing your steps but in reality it is you who are creating its pattern, embarked on a new, fantastically difficult tactic whose success is nevertheless guaranteed. You know this. But it will be a long time before the ordinary assurances will be able to make themselves felt in the strange, closed-off state you are in now. You may as well forget them and abandon yourself to the secret growing that has taken over. Nothing can stop it, so there is no point in worrying about it or even thinking about it.

How we move around in our little ventilated situation, how roomy it seems! There is so much to do after all, so many people to be with, and we like them all. But meanwhile it seems as if our little space were moving counter to us, dragging us backward. We have reached this far point of where we are by following someone's advice, and at times it seems as though it might have been the wrong advice. If this were the case, to become aware of it would be no help because we have refined the baser elements out of our present situation and are technically on the same footing with others of different origins who meet and socialize with us. One sign of this is that no one remarks on the lateness of the hour, for we all believe we have reached a point where such details no longer count; we believe that we are immune to time because we are "out of" it. Yet we know dimly that the stillness we have attained is racing forward faster than ever toward its rendezvous with the encroaching past; we know this and we turn from it, to take refuge in dreams where all is not exactly well either, in which we reach the summit of our aspirations to find the mass below

riddled and honeycombed with vacancy, yet there is room on the crest to move around in; it might almost qualify as an oasis. But as we all know, the thing about an oasis is that the whole desert has to become one before its exotic theories can benefit us, and even that would not be enough because then there would be too much of a contrast with the ordinary temperate climate leading up to it. Yet one can very well live and enjoy the fruits of one's considerable labors in arriving at this place which could be the end of the world in no unfavorable sense; there are the same things to look at and be surrounded by although in lesser numbers; what it is in quality as opposed to quantity. But can the one exist without the other? These thoughts oppress one in the social world one has built around oneself, especially the thought of these other infinite worlds upon worlds; and when one really examines one's own world in the harsher light of its happiness-potential one sees that it is a shambles indeed. Yet there is air to breathe. One may at least stay here a while hoping for more and better things to come.

That's the way it goes. For many weeks you have been exploring what seemed to be a profitable way of doing. You discovered that there was a fork in the road, so first you followed what seemed to be the less promising, or at any rate the more obvious, of the two branches until you felt you had a good idea of where it led. Then you returned to investigate the more tangled way, and for a time its intricacies seemed to promise a more complex and therefore a more practical goal for you, one that could be picked up in any number of ways so that all its faces or applications could be thoroughly scrutinized. And in so doing you began to realize that the two branches were joined together again, farther ahead; that this place of joining was indeed the end, and that it was the very place you set out from, whose intolerable mixture of reality and fantasy had started you on the road which has now come full circle. It has been an absorbing puzzle, but in the end all the pieces fit together like a ghost story that turns out to have a perfectly rational explanation. Nothing remains but to begin

living with this discovery, that is without the hope mentioned above. Even this is not so easy, for the reduced mode or scope must itself be nourished by a form of hope, or hope that doesn't take itself seriously. One must move very fast in order to stay in the same place, as the Red Queen said, the reason being that once you have decided there is no alternative to remaining motionless you must still learn to cope with the onrushing tide of time and all the confusing phenomena it bears in its wake, some of which perfectly resemble the unfinished but seemingly salvageable states of reality at cross-purposes with itself that first caused you to grow restless, to begin fidgeting with various impractical schemes that were in the end, we have seen, finally reduced to zero. Yet they cannot be banished from the system any more than physical matter can, and their nature, which is part and parcel of their existence, is to remain incomplete, clamoring for wholeness. So that now two quite other and grimmer alternatives present themselves: that of staying where you are and risking eventual destruction at the hands of those dishonest counselors of many aspects, or of being swept back by them into a past drenched in nostalgia whose sweetness burns like gall. And it is a choice that we have to make.

As a lost dog on the edge of a sidewalk timidly approaches first one passerby and then another, uncertain of what to ask for, taking a few embarrassed steps in one direction and then suddenly veering to another before being able to ascertain what reception his mute entreaty might have met with, lost, puzzled, ashamed, ready to slink back into his inner confusion at the first brush with the outside world, so your aspirations, my soul, on this busy thoroughfare that is the great highway of life. What do you think to gain from merely standing there looking worried, while the tide of humanity sweeps ever onward, toward some goal it gives every sign of being as intimately acquainted with as you are with the sharp-edged problems that beset you from every angle? Do you really think that if you succeed in looking pathetic enough some kindly stranger will stop to ask your name and address and

then steer you safely to your very door? No, I do not think you are afflicted with that kind of presumption, and yet your pitiable waif's stance, that inquiring look that darts uneasily from side to side as though to ward off a blow—these do not argue in your favor, even though we both know you to be a strong upright character, far above such cheap attempts to play on the emotions of others. And there is no use trying to tell them that the touching melancholy of your stare is the product not of self-pity but of a lucid attempt to find out just where you stand in the fast-moving stream of traffic that flows endlessly from horizon to horizon like a dark river. *We* know that the pose you happen to be striking for the world to see matters nothing to you, it could just as easily be some other one, joyous-looking or haughty and overbearing, or whatever. It is only that you happened to be wearing this look as you arrived at the end of your perusal of the way left open to you, and it “froze” on you, just as your mother warned you it would when you were little. And now it is the face you show to the world, the face of expectancy, strange as it seems. Perhaps Childe Roland wore such a look as he drew nearer to the Dark Tower, every energy concentrated toward the encounter with the King of Elfland, reasonably certain of the victorious outcome, yet not so much as to erase the premature lines of care from his pale and tear-stained face. Maybe it is just that you don't want to outrage anyone, especially now that the moment of your own encounter seems to be getting closer. You can feel it in every pore, in the sudden hush that falls over the din of the busy street and the unusual darkness in the sky even though no clouds are apparent. Your miserable premature spring has finally turned into the real thing, confirmed by the calendar, but what a sad look it wears, especially after its promising beginnings that now seem so far back in the past. The air is moist and almost black, and sharp with the chill; the magnolia petals flatten and fall off one after the other onto the half-frozen mud of the ground where only a few spears of sickly green grass have managed to lift their heads. All this comes as no surprise, it is even somewhat of a relief, and better than the dire sequel that those precocious moments

seemed to promise, cataclysms instead of the ominous hush that now lies over everything. And who is to say whether or not this silence isn't the very one requested so as to be able to speak? Perhaps it seems ominous only because it is concentrating so intensely on you and what you have to say.

"Whatever was, is, and must be"—these words occur again to you now, though in a different register, transposed from a major into a minor key. Yet they are the same words as before. Their meaning is the same, only you have changed: you are viewing it all from a different angle, perhaps not more nor less accurate than the previous one, but in any case a necessary one no doubt for the in-the-round effect to be achieved. We see it all now. The thing that our actions have accomplished, and its results for us. And it is no longer a nameless thing, but something colorful and full of interest, a chronicle play of our lives, with the last act still in the dim future, so that we can't tell yet whether it is a comedy or a tragedy, all we know is that it is crammed with action and the substance of life. Surely all this living that has gone on that is ours is good in some way, though we cannot tell why: we know only that our sympathy has deepened, quickened by the onrushing spectacle, to the point where we are like spectators swarming up onto the stage to be absorbed into the play, though always aware that this is an impossibility, and that the actors continue to recite their lines as if we weren't there. Yet in the end, we think, this may become possible; that is the time when audience and actor and writer and director all mingle joyously together as one, as the curtain descends a last time to separate them from the half-empty theater. When this happens—yet there is no point in looking to that either. The apotheosis never attracted you, only those few moments in the next-to-last act where everything suddenly becomes momentarily clear, to sink again into semiobscurity before the final blaze which merely confirms the truth of what had been succinctly stated long before. But there does not seem to be any indication that this moment is approaching.

Except that the silence continues to focus on you. Who am I after all, you say despairingly once again, to have merited so much attention on the part of the universe; what does it think to get from me that it doesn't have already? I know too that my solipsistic approach is totally wrongheaded and foolish, that the universe isn't listening to me any more than the sea can be heard inside conch shells. But I'm just a mute observer—it isn't my fault that I can really notice how everything around me is waiting just for me to get up and say the word, whatever that is. And surely even the eyes of the beloved are fixed on you as though wondering, "What is he going to do *this* time?" And those eyes as well as the trees and skies that surround you are full of apprehension waiting for this word that must come from you and that you have not in you. "What am I going to say?" But as you continue gazing embarrassedly into the eyes of the beloved, talking about extraneous matters, you become aware of an invisible web that connects those eyes to you, and both of you to the atmosphere of this room which is leading up to you after the vagaries of the space outside. Suddenly you realize that you have been talking for a long time without listening to yourself; you must have said *it* a long way back without knowing it, for everything in the room has fallen back into its familiar place, only this time organized according to the invisible guidelines that radiate out from both of you like the laws that govern a kingdom. Now there is so much to talk about that it seems neither of you will ever get done talking. And the word that everything hinged on is buried back there; by mutual consent neither of you examined it when it was pronounced and rushed to its final resting place. It is doing the organizing, the guidelines radiate from its control; therefore it is good not to know what it is since its results can be known so intimately, appreciated for what they are; it is best then that the buried word remain buried for we were intended to appreciate only its fruits and not the secret principle activating them—to know this would be to know too much. Meanwhile it is possible to know just enough, and this is all we were supposed to know, toward which we have been straining all our lives. We are to

read this in outward things: the spoons and greasy tables in this room, the wooden shelves, the flyspecked ceiling merging into gloom—good and happy things, nevertheless, that tell us little of themselves and more about ourselves than we had ever imagined it was possible to know. They have become the fabric of life.

Until, accustomed to disappointments, you can let yourself rule and be ruled by these strings or emanations that connect everything together, you haven't fully exorcised the demon of doubt that sets you in motion like a rocking horse that cannot stop rocking. You may have scored a few points there where you first took those few steps (no more than three, in all likelihood) when you first realized the enormity of the choice between two kinds of mutually exclusive happiness. And you also realized the error of forever ruminating on and repeating those fatal steps, like a broken movie projector that keeps showing the same strip of film—you realized this when you were already far from that experience which had indeed begun to take on the unearthly weirdness of an old photograph. You cried out in the desert and you collapsed into yourself, indifferent to the progress of the seasons and the planets in their orbits, and you died for the first time. And now that you have been raised from the tomb like Lazarus by obscure miraculous forces you are surprised that the earth isn't better than the one you left behind, that all things haven't yet perfected themselves as you believe you have done by dying and being resuscitated to the uncertain glory of this day in early spring. You can't get over the fact that conversations still sound the same, that clouds of unhappiness still persist in the unseen mesh that draws around everything, uniting it in a firm purpose as it causes each individual thing to bulge more brightly and more darkly at the same time, drawing out the nature of its real being. But that is the wonder of it: that you have returned not to the supernatural glow of heaven but to the ordinary daylight you knew so well before it passed from your view, and which continues to enrich you as it steepens you

and your ageless chattels of mind, imagination, timid first love and quiet acceptance of experience in its revitalizing tide. And the miracle is not that you have returned—you always knew you would—but that things have remained the same. The day is not far advanced: it still half-seriously offers with one hand the promise that it pockets with the other, and it is still up to you to seize the occasion, jump into the fray, not be ruled by its cruel if only human whims. The person sitting opposite you who asked you a question is still waiting for the answer; he has not yet found your hesitation unusual, but it is up to you to grasp it with both hands, wrenching it from the web of connectives to rub off the grime that has obscured its brilliance so as to restore it to him, that pause which is the answer you have both been expecting. When it was new everybody could tell this, but years of inactivity and your own inattention have tarnished it beyond recognition. It needs a new voice to tell it, otherwise it will seem just another awkward pause in a conversation largely made up of similar ones, and will never be able to realize its potential as a catalyst, turning you both in on yourself and outward to that crystalline gaze that has been the backing of your days and nights for so long now. For the time being only you know it for what it is, but as you continue to hold on to it others will begin to realize its true nature, until finally it stands as the shortest distance between your aims and those of the beloved, the only human ground that can nurture your hopes and fears into the tree of life that is as big as the universe and entirely fills it up with its positive idea of growth and gaining control. So it is permissible to rest here awhile in this pause you alone discovered: a little repose can do no harm at this stage; meanwhile do not fear that when you next speak the whole scene will come to life again, as though triggered by invisible machines. There is not much for you to do except wait in the anticipation of your inevitable reply.

Inevitable, but so often postponed. Whole eras of history have sprung up in the gaps left by these pauses, dynasties,

barbarian invasions and so on until the grass and shards stage, and still the answer is temporarily delayed. During these periods one thought enclosed everything like the blue sky of history: that it really was this one and no other. As long as this is the case everything else can take its course, time can flow into eternity leaving a huge deltalike deposit whose fan broadens and broadens and is my life, the time I am taking; we get up in the morning and blow on some half-dead coals, maybe for the last time; my hair is white and straggly and I hardly recognize my face anymore, yet none of this matters so long as your reply twists it all together, the transparent axle of this particular chapter in history. It seems that the blue of the sky is a little paler each morning, as happens toward the end of each epoch, yet one doesn't want to move hastily, but to continue at this half-savage, half-pastoral existence, until one day the unmistakable dry but deep accent is heard:

“You waited too long. And now you are going to be rewarded by my attention. Make no mistake: it will probably seem to you as though nothing has changed; nothing will show in the outward details of your life and each night you will creep tired and enraged into bed. Know however that I am listening. From now on the invisible bounty of my concern will be there to keep you company, and as you mature it will unlock more of the same space for you so that eventually all your territory will have become rightfully yours again.”

I know now that I am no longer waiting, and that the previous part of my life in which I thought I was waiting and therefore only half-alive was not waiting, although it was tinged with expectancy, but living under and into this reply which has suddenly caused everything in my world to take on new meaning. It is as though I had picked up a thread which I had merely mislaid but which for a long time seemed lost. And all because I am certain now, albeit for no very good reason, that it was this one and no other. The sadness that infected us as

children and stayed on through adulthood has healed, and there can be no other way except this way of health we are taking, silent as it is. But it lets us look back on those other, seemingly spoiled days and re-evaluate them: actually they were too well-rounded, each bore its share of happiness and grief and finished its tale just as twilight was descending; those days are now an inseparable part of our story despite their air of immaturity and tentativeness; they have the freshness of early works which may be wrongly discarded later. Nor is today really any different: we are as childish as ever, it turns out, only perhaps a little better at disguising it, but we still want what we want when we want it and no power on earth is strong enough to deny it to us. But at least we see now that this is how things are, and so we have the sense to stop insisting every so often under the guise of some apparently unrelated activity, because we think we shall be better satisfied this way; underneath the discreet behavior the desire is as imperious as ever, but after so many postponements we now realize that a little delay won't hurt and we can relax in the assurance of eventual satisfaction. This was the message of that day in the street, when you first perceived that conventional happiness would not do for you and decided to opt for the erratic kind despite the dangers that its need for continual growth and expansion exposed it to. This started you on your way, although it often seemed as though your feet had struck roots into the ground and you were doomed to grow and decay like a tree. Nevertheless you were aware of moving, whether it was you who were moving or the landscape moving forward toward you, and you could remain patient with the idea of growth as long as the concept of uniqueness—that one and no other—shone like a star in the sky above you.

Today your wanderings have come full circle. Having begun by rejecting the idea of oneness in favor of a plurality of experiences, earthly and spiritual, in fact a plurality of different lives that you lived out to your liking while time proceeded at another, imperturbable rate, you gradually became aware

that the very diversity of these experiences was endangered by its own inner nature, for variety implies parallelism, and all these highly individualistic ways of thinking and doing were actually moving in the same direction and constantly threatening to merge with one another in a single one-way motion toward that invisible goal of concrete diversity. For just as all kinds of people spring up on earth and imagine themselves very different from each other though they are basically the same, so all these ideas had arisen in the same head and were merely aspects of a single organism: yourself, or perhaps your desire to be different. So that now in order to avoid extinction it again became necessary to invoke the idea of oneness, only this time if possible on a higher plane, in order for the similarities in your various lives to cancel each other out and the differences to remain, but under the aegis of singleness, separateness, so that each difference might be taken as the type of all the others and yet remain intrinsically itself, unlike anything in the world. Which brings us to you and the scene in the little restaurant. You are still there, far above me like the polestar and enclosing me like the dome of the heavens; your singularity has become oneness, that is your various traits and distinguishing marks have flattened out into a cloudlike protective covering whose irregularities are all functions of its uniformity, and which constitutes an arbitrary but definitive boundary line between the new informal, almost haphazard way of life that is to be mine permanently and the monolithic samenesses of the world that exists to be shut out. For it has been measured once and for all. It would be wrong to look back at it, and luckily we are so constructed that the urge to do so can never waken in us. We are both alive and free.

If you could see a movie of yourself you would realize that this is true. Movies show us ourselves as we had not yet learned to recognize us—something in the nature of daily being or happening that quickly gets folded over into ancient history like yesterday's newspaper, but in so doing a new face has been revealed, a surface on which a new phrase may be written

before it rejoins history, or it may remain blank and do so anyway: it doesn't matter because each thing is coming up in its time and receding into the past, and this is what we all expect and want. What does matter is what becomes of it once it has entered the past's sacred precincts; when, bending under the weight of an all-powerful nostalgia, its every contour is at last revealed for what it was, but this can be known only in the past. It isn't wrong to look at things in this way—how else could we live in the present knowing it was the present except in the context of the important things that have already happened? No, one must treasure each moment of the past, get the same thrill from it that one gets from watching each moment of an old movie. These windows on the past enable us to see enough to stay on an even keel in the razor's-edge present which is really a no-time, continually straying over the border into the positive past and the negative future whose movements alone define it. Unfortunately we have to live in it. We are appalled at this. Because its no-time, no-space dimensions offer us no signposts, nothing to be guided by. In this dimensionless area a single step can be leagues or inches; the flame of a match can seem like an explosion on the sun or it can make no dent in the matte-grey, uniform night. The jolting and loss of gravity produce a permanent condition of nausea, always buzzing faintly at the blurred edge where life is hinged to the future and to the past. But only focus on the past through the clear movie-theater dark and you are a changed person, and can begin to live again. That is why we, snatched from sudden freedom, are able to communicate only through this celluloid vehicle that has immortalized and given a definitive shape to our formless gestures; we can live as though we had caught up with time and avoid the sickness of the present, a shapeless blur as meaningless as a carelessly exposed roll of film. There is hardness and density now, and our story takes on the clear, compact shape of the plot of a novel, with all its edges and inner passages laid bare for the reader, to be resumed and resumed over and over, that is taken up and put aside and taken up again.

What place is there in the continuing story for all the adventures, the wayward pleasures, the medium-size experiences that somehow don't fit in but which loom larger and more interesting as they begin to retreat into the past? There were so many things held back, kept back, because they didn't fit into the plot or because their tone wasn't in keeping with the whole. So many of these things have been discarded, and they now tower on the brink of the continuity, hemming it in like dark crags above a valley stream. One sometimes forgets that to be all one way may be preferable to eclectic diversity in the interests of verisimilitude, even for those of the opposite persuasion; the most powerful preachers are those persuaded in advance and their unalterable lessons are deeply moving just because of this rigidity, with none of the tepidness of this meandering stream of our narration with its well-chosen and typical episodes, which now seems to be trying to bury itself in the landscape. The rejected chapters have taken over. For a long time it was as though only the most patient scholar or the recording angel himself would ever interest himself in them. Now it seems as though that angel had begun to dominate the whole story: he who was supposed only to copy it all down has joined forces with the misshapen, misfit pieces that were never meant to go into it but at best to stay on the sidelines so as to point up how everything else belonged together, and the resulting mountain of data threatens us; one can almost hear the beginning of the lyric crash in which everything will be lost and pulverized, changed back into atoms ready to resume new combinations and shapes again, new wilder tendencies, as foreign to what we have carefully put in and kept out as a new chart of elements or another planet—unimaginable, in a word. And would you believe that this word could possibly be our salvation? For we are rescued by what we cannot imagine: it is what finally takes us up and shuts our story, replacing it among the millions of similar volumes that by no means menace its uniqueness but on the contrary situate it in the proper depth and perspective. At last we have that rightness that is rightfully ours. But we do not know what brought it about.

It could be anything, you say. But it could not have been an exercise in defining the present when our position, our very lives depend on those fixed loci of past and future that leave no room for the nominal existence of anything else. But it turns out you have been pursuing the discussion in a leisurely way throughout January and February and now to a point farther into the wilderness of this new year which makes such a commotion and goes by so quickly. These ample digressions of yours have carried you ahead to a distant and seemingly remote place, and it is here that you stop to give emphasis to all the way you have traveled and to your present silence. And it is here that I am quite ready to admit that I am alone, that the film I have been watching all this time may be only a mirror, with all the characters including that of the old aunt played by me in different disguises. If you want a certain vitality you can only supply it yourself, or there comes a point, anyway, when no one's actions but your own seem dramatically convincing and justifiable in the plot that the number of your days concocts. I have been watching this film, therefore, and now I have seen enough; as I leave the theater I am surprised to find that it is still daylight outside (the darkness of the film as well as its specks of light were so intense); I am forced to squint; in this way I gradually get an idea of where I am. Only this world is not as light as the other one; it is made grey with shadows like cobwebs that deepen as the memory of the film begins to fade. This is the way all movies are meant to end, but how is it possible to go on living just now except by plunging into the middle of some other one that you have doubtless seen before? It seems truly impossible, but invariably at this point we are walking together along a street in some well-known city. The allegory is ended, its coils absorbed into the past, and this afternoon is as wide as an ocean. It is the time we have now, and all our wasted time sinks into the sea and is swallowed up without a trace. The past is dust and ashes, and this incommensurably wide way leads to the pragmatic and kinetic future.

David Rosenberg

Afternoon

In the branches the light

so that the limbs

go out

on the moss

patient

my cares

o nature—ah! less alone

strange

the earth

should clothe me

with my shadow

nothing at all deceives me

it takes just everything

we have

to conceive this

Ode

James Bond's girl friend
Lay in bed, having
A bad dream during a thunderstorm
All the leaves came falling down:
Two men in space,

A lady and her dog,
A lady and her baby,
A tree house, little huts and boats,
And men caught birds
To take to another country

Aaron stayed in the temple
But Mrs. Grub went to the dentist
Leaving her boy with chicken pox
It was raining on the house
It was snowing on the police cars

And so the birthday girl
Who drags her hair
Down down down to the practice mat
Unwinding the serpent power
Of her spine behind her

Hears the owl
That hoots no more
Dazzled by headlights as it were
And swept across the road, the tree empty,
And the mind emptier than ever before, and freer.

Allen Ginsberg

Elegy for Neal Cassidy

OK Neal
aethereal Spirit
 bright as moving air
 blue as city dawn
happy as light released by Day
 over the city's new buildings—

Maya's Giant bricks rise rebuilt
 in Lower East Side
windows shine in milky smog.
 Appearance unnecessary now

Peter sleeps alone next room, sad.
You're reincarnate? Can ya hear me talkin?
If anyone had strength to hear the invisible,
And drive thru Maya Wall
 you *had* it—

 What're you now, Spirit?
That were spirit in body—

Body's cremate
 by Railroad track
San Miguel Allende Desert,
 outside town,
Spirit become spirit,
 robot reduced Ashes.

Tender Spirit, thank you for touching me with tender hands
When you were young, in a beautiful body,
 Such a pure touch it was Hope beyond Maya-meat,
What are you now,
 Impersonal, tender—
you showed me in your muscle/warmth/over twenty years
 ago

when I lay trembling at your breast
 put your arm around my neck,
—we stood together in a bare room on 103'd St.
Listening to a wooden Radio,
 with our eyes closed
Eternal redness of Shabda
 lamped in our brains
at Illinois Jacquet's Saxophone Shuddering,
 the prophetic Honk of Louis Jordan,
 Honeydrippers, open the Door Richard
 To Christ's Apocalypse—
The buildings're insubstantial—
That's my New York Vision
 outside eastern apartment offices
 where telephone rang last night
 and stranger's friendly Denver Voice
asked me, had I heard the news from the West?

Some gathering Bust, Eugene Oregon or Hollywood Impends
 I had premonition
“No” I said—“been away all week,”
 “you havent heard the News from the West,
 Neal Cassidy is dead—”
Peter's dove-voiced Oh! on the other line, listening.

Your picture stares cheerful, tearful, strain'd,
 a candle burns,
 green stick incense by household gods.
Military Tyranny overtakes Universities, your Prophecy
 approaching its kindest sense brings us
 Down
 to the Great Year's awakening.

Kesey's in Oregon writing novel language
 farm alone.
Hadjia no more to do? Was your work all done?
 Had ya seen your first son?
 Why'dja leave us all here?
 Has the battle been won?

I'm a phantom skeleton with teeth, skull
resting on a pillow
calling your spirit
god echo consciousness, murmuring
sadly to myself.

Lament in downlight's not needed,
the world is released,
desire fulfilled, your history over,
story told, Karma resolved,
prayers completed
vision manifest, new consciousness fulfilled,
spirit returned in a circle,
world left standing empty, busses roaring through streets—
garbage scattered on pavements galore—
Grandeur solidified, phantom-familiar fate
returned to Auto-dawn,
your destiny fallen on RR track
My body breathes easy,
I lie alone,
living
After friendship fades from flesh forms—
heavy happiness hangs in heart,
I could talk to you forever,
The pleasure inexhaustible,
discourse of spirit to spirit,
O Spirit.

Sir Spirit, forgive me my sins,
Sir Spirit give me your blessing again,
Sir Spirit forgive my phantom body's demands,
Sir Spirit thanks for your kindness past,
Sir Spirit in Heaven, What difference yr mortal form,
What further this great show of Space?
Speedy passions generations of
Question? agonic Texas Nightrides?
psychedelic bus hejira-jazz,
Green auto poetries, inspired roads?

Sad, Jack in Lowell saw the phantom most—
lonelier than all, except your noble Self.
Sir Spirit, an' I drift alone: Oh deep sigh.

10 Feb 1968 5-5:30 AM

Four Sonnets

I.

I dreamed of a clipper ship
Gold on blue THE CHASEY ALICE
Until he'd seen which Captain You said
He'd seen nothing, I woke bold
Chased you to get caught in the hold
Back to sleep 2 nightmares
Solid ones down not to be told
Woke not wanting to be in life
Wasn't, outside warmed
To my blood clean cold quickened
On the way to town for food and
Back for you, though I was still
A little sulky & grim
So you fucked me back in

2.

Pink & white, chiffon & chenille, & cherubs
They frame oval mirror cracked across
No reflection of me it's rented newly
My books on & under a vanity
Bamboo's here too, Southamptonese, chair
A library's dark desk, austere
I rearrange change them which change me
I'll often forget to see
Pink & white to be lost after 90 days
Town's as foreign-looking & mine
No town fits—not my image of one, but sense
That a town might make sense.
Clean cold-weather town, historical interest
Winter emptied, slickly plain downtown

3.

Hour less close to feeling bad & restless
Spent bath food & drink while you've been sleeping
Now reading I hear you walking past my door shut
& back to bed, no words none needed, how can
I think of what's not done when there's an easy doing
Always now? Between us. As we're doing each
If we reach there are words too, & walks & books to-
gether, tether we pull tighter, after
It turned surprising into the prize for staying
At it, see there are some sometimes, prizes, that aren't
Lost when found out, & it isn't even like winning
Which is what gets to be being over fast, it's like
Being, & spreading, & air we're breathing

4.

How long you can do nothing depends on what
You're doing; breathing from the bottom examining
Shocking pink knee socks recalling legs
Numb blue slacked from coldly walking into
Midst of the day; glad going out's still not next
Pink wheat nap rustles tipped tired shoes
Swallow... air hum ear ocean
This light chair's held together by a safety pin
& bamboo shoots, some work. I'll just put on
A dunce caprice if I close my eyes ride
Air waves "Wonder what the dead people are doing
Tonight" me too
Now doused with hands splashing up nothing
Dunk in blow out float in sit down in it

Sarah Plimpton

the road on the wall
pulled shut
the sun from your eye
set
with the clouds
burning larger
at the base of the sky
burying the light
in your head
talking again
as we walked on the road
hardened by the earth
packed down in the dark

AMAZING

★ **BUT**
TRUE!



A
PORTFOLIO
OF VISUAL
WORKS



BY JOE BRAINARD



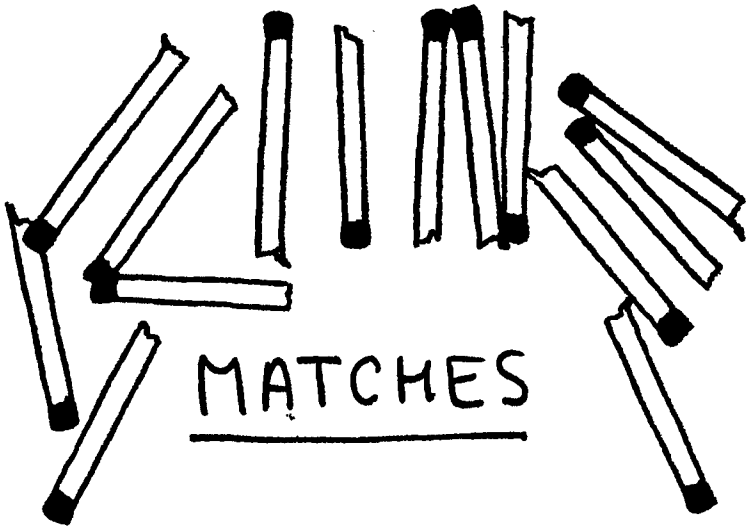
A

**Love story with
the car as hero**

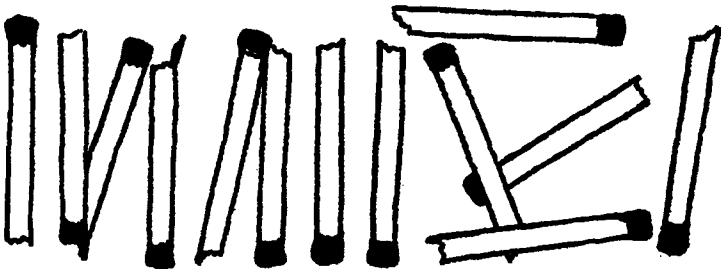
WOULD GO OVER
BIG WITH CARS.

"HE WHO
WRITES
WITH BIG
PEN FILL
UP PAGE
FAST."

AN OLD
INDIAN
PROVERB

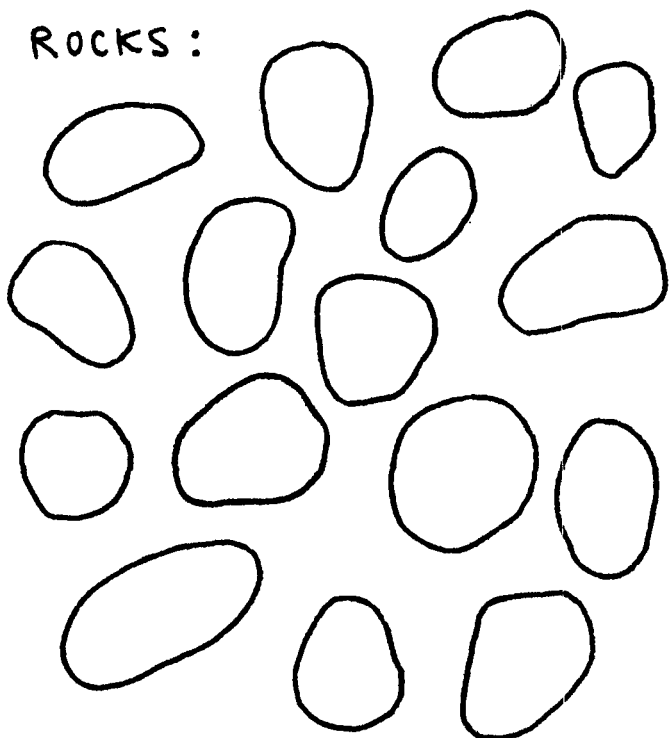


IF I STRIKE
SAY 50 MATCHES A
DAY (AND I DO) IN
A YEAR'S TIME THAT
WOULD BE _____
_____ I HATE MATH.



THE OCEAN

WHAT MARVELOUS
THINGS CAN BE FOUND
BY THE OCEAN. TAKE,
FOR EXAMPLE, THESE
ROCKS:



AUTUMNAL PARAPHERN ALIA



LIFE



Is

"HERE TODAY,
GONE TOMORROW"

(WITH A LOT OF STUFF INBETWEEN)



NIGHT



DAY, YOU HAVE GONE AND
DONE IT AGAIN.

THE SKY

WE SEE SO MANY
DIFFERENT THINGS WHEN
WE LOOK AT THE SKY.



LIFE

LIFE IS STAYING
UNTIL IT'S TIME
TO GO.

DEATH

WELL, I GUESS
I SHOULD BE
GOING NOW.

James Schuyler

A Stone Knife

Dec. 26, 1969

Dear Kenward,

What a pearl
of a letter knife. It's just
the thing I needed, something
to rest my eyes on, and always
wanted, which is to say
it's that of which I
felt the lack but
didn't know of, of no
real use and yet
essential as a button
box, or maps, green
morning skies, islands and
canals in oatmeal, the steam
off oyster stew. Brown
agate, veined as a woods
by smoke that has to it
the watery twist of eel grass
in a quick, rust-discolored
cove. Undulating lines of
northern evening—a Munch
without the angst—a
hint of almost amber:
to the nose, a resinous
thought, to the eye, a
lacquered needle green
where no green is, a
present after-image.
Sleek as an ax, bare

and elegant as a tarn,
manly as a lingam,
November weather petrified,
it is just the thing
to do what with? To
open letters? No, it
is just the thing, an
object, dark, fierce
and beautiful in which
the surprise is that
the surprise, once
past, is always there:
which to enjoy is
not to consume. The un-
recapturable returns
in a brown world
made out of wood,
snow streaked, storm epi-
center still in stone.

In earliest morning

an orange devours
the crusts of clouds and you,
getting up, put on
your daily life
grown somewhat shabby, worn
but comfortable, like old jeans: at the least,
familiar. Water
boils, coffee
scents the air
and level light plunges
among the layering boughs of a balsam fir
and enflames its trunk.
Other trees are scratched
lightly on the west.
A purposeful mutt
makes dark marks
in blue dew. The day
offers so much, holds
so little or is it
simply you who
asking too much take
too little? It is
merely meaning
so always marvelously
gratuitous and undemanding,
freighted with messages
and meaning: such
as, day
is different from the night
for some; see
the south dazzle
in an effulgence
thrown out by an ocean;
a myriad iridescence
of green;

the shape
of the cold egg
you break
and with a fork
again break
and stir and pour
into a pan, where it lightly hisses.
The sediment
in your mind sinks
as something rises
in it, a thought
perhaps, like a tree when it
is just two green
crumpled bits of tape
secured to grit; a
memory—beyond
a box of Gold Dust
laundry soap a cherry
in full flower and
later full of fruit;
a face, a name
without a face,
water with a name:
Mediterranean, Cazenovia, or
iced, or
to be flushed
away; a
flash of
good humor, no
more than a
wink. The sun
dims its light
behind a morning
Times of cloud.

The Trash Book

for Joe Brainard

Then I do not know what
to paste next in the
Trash Book: grass, pretending
to be a smear maybe or
that stump there that knows
now it will never grow
up to be some pencils or
a yacht even. A piece of
voice saying (it sounds like)
“I thought her did.” Or
the hum that hangs in only
my left ear. Or “Beer” not
beer, all wet, the quiver
of the word one night in
1942 looking at a cardboard
girl sitting on a moon in
West Virginia. She smiled
and sipped her Miller’s.

A Penis Moon

twas the night before Columbus Day, '70
and the humidity gave a semblance
of warmth to a day not unchilly, even somewhat clammy.
Some listless starlings pecked in a lackluster way
among the leaf litter: from elms, which crumble in the
stillness as you look.

A cloud kissed me.
The moon came up like a white spitz
going downtown to get the paper.
A rabbit named Spatsy hops in its cage.
He is eating a pear.
I had a thought, that life should not have uses
saying, "But what *good* is it?" just
"accept with pleasure"ness
then I saw a face

and what use is it, hankering
for what you can't won't ever have?
Here is the spitz, back from Silver's
with the paper. It is the wrong paper.
Shall we beat the dog, or praise him?
Reading of discoveries by wooly moonlight,
it rises today, attentive as one rabbit ear.

The Dog Wants His Dinner

for Clark Coolidge

The sky is pitiless. I beg
your pardon? OK then
the sky is pitted. The yard
is sand and laced with roots
afloat on rock encasing fire.
You think so do you. No.
Yes. Don't know. Check one.
Forget all you ever knew.
Sorry. Not my romance. What
is? Sorry. We don't take
in trick questions. You mean?
I do: put down that.
Put that down too. Skies
of spit, seas where whales
piss and die to make a bar
of scented soap, uhm smells
good. She came in like an ex-
cited headline. The deer
they all were starving! To
death, even, perhaps. And
eating people! What to do
with these disordered herds
of words? I said I would
eat my words and do so, now
you see. He eats them, all
up. Greedily. Yesterday the
air was squeaky clean today
it's dull and lifeless as an
addict's armpit. Surely you
mean leafless. I have a flea
bite, here, pink, of course

as an eye disease: the cat
who brings me fleas dies
like a dog, sleepily, or
an unwatered plant. That
was exciting wasn't it. It's
not that I crave. Uh did
you say crave? Some words
are briefly worse than others:
get the Librium gun and point
it and the Kodak at that Kodiak.
You see? No hope. So don't
hope. Hop, skip, jump or
lie down. Feed your face.
Now feed the dog. He ate his.
He is eating the cat who
objects. Fix the fire. Put
out the light. An ice cold
hand slides in the window
to touch your uncovered head
forehead cheeks lips lobes
and all with worlds of fire
chilled by distance. O night.
Bedclothes loosen. Unseen twigs
erect themselves in air. You
asleep too, O magic root.

Running Footsteps

A thin brown stain
down the white brick wall
I guess yes
the new roof leaks
and there are holes
drilled in the asphalt
out there where manhole
covers used to blow:
escapes for leaks. Sleet
down the chimney:
a rustle broken
into dots and dashes. Then
a midwinter downpour.
The streets are rivers
or the water streets
in a small-town dream
“They live on Water Street
near the corner of Front Street
off Railroad Avenue.”
The current fails.
Lights go out
in parts of town. In
the slosh there are
running footsteps: has
got to go though
an act of clouds would will
otherwise. Otherwise,
had stayed where was...?
Couldn't. Why?
On and off lights
prolong into surges
the chatter of
rain on rain, the up
close rats' nesting noise

in the chimney: "It's
a good night to stay
in" so out you
go into it it's
almost like
that other night
you left holding
your breath to
descend and issue
screaming: your
tonight running
footsteps, rain
icy and loud
is a kind of
what to your
surprise is you
screaming in
fear, in rage,
instinctual
to find relief
muscular surges
running footsteps
the rain
rain-chilled
to be alive

The Crystal Lithium

for R.J.

The smell of snow, stinging in nostrils as the wind lifts it
from a beach
Eye-shuttering, mixed with sand, or when snow lies under
the street lamps and on all
And the air is emptied to an uplifting gasiness
That turns lungs to winter waterwings, buoying, and the
bright white night
Freezes in sight a lapse of waves, balsamic, salty, unexpected:
Hours after swimming, sitting thinking biting at a hangnail
And the taste of the—to your eyes—invisible crystals
irradiates the world
“The sea is salt”
“And so am I”
“Don’t bite your nails”
and the metal flavor of a nail—are
these brads?—
Taken with a slight spitting motion from between teeth and
whanged into place
(Boards and sawdust) and the nail set is ridged with cold
Permanently as marble, always degrees cooler than the
rooms of air it lies in
Felt as you lay your cheek upon the counter on which sits a
blue-banded cup
A counter of condensed wintry exhalations glittering
infinitesimally
A promise, late on a broiling day in late September, of the
cold kiss
Of marble sheets to one who goes barefoot quickly in the
snow and early
Only so far as the ash can—bang, dump—and back and slams
the door:

Too cold to get up though at the edges of the blinds the sky
Shows blue as flames that break on a red sea in which black
coals float:
Pebbles in a pocket embed the seam with grains of sand
Which as they will have found their way into a pattern
between foot and bedfoot
“A place for everything and everything in its place” how
wasteful, how wrong
It seems when snow in fat, hand-stuffed flakes falls slow
and steady in the sea
“Now you see it, now you don’t” the waves growl as they
grind and roll out
At your feet (in boots) a Christmas tree naked of needles
Still wound with swags of tarnishing tinsel, faintly alarming
as the thought
Of damp electricity or sluggish lightning and for your
health-desiring pains
The wind awards: Chapped Lips: on which to rub Time’s
latest acquisition
Tinned, dowel-shaped and inappropriately flavored sheep
wool fat
A greasy sense-eclipsing fog “I can’t see
Without my glasses” “You certainly can’t see with them
all steamed up
Like that. Pull over, park and wipe them off.” The thunder
of a summer’s day
Rolls down the shimmering blacktop and mowed grass
juice thickens the air
Like, “stir until it coats the spoon, remove from heat, let
cool and chill”
Like this, graying up for more snow, maybe, in which a
small flock
Of—sparrows?—small, anyway, dust kitty colored birds fly
up
On a dotted diagonal and there, ah, is the answer:
Starlings, bullies of birdland, lousing up
The pecking order, respecters of no rights (what bird is)
unloved (oh?)

Not so likeable as some: that's temperate enough and the
temperature
Drops to rise to snowability of a softness even in its scent
of roses
Made of untinted butter frosting: Happy Name Day, Blue
Jay, staggering
On slow-up wings into the shrunk into itself from cold
forsythia snarl
And above these thoughts there waves another tangle but
parched with heat
And not with cold although the heat is on because of cold
settled all
About as though, swimming under water, in clearly fishy
water, you
Inhaled and found one could and live and also found you
altogether
Did not like it, January, laid out on a bed of ice, disgorging
February, shaped like a flounder, and March with her steel
bead pocketbook,
And April, goofy and under-dressed and with a loud laugh,
and May
Who will of course be voted Miss Best Liked (she expects it),
And June, with a toothpaste smile, fresh from her flea bath,
and gross July,
Flexing itself, and steamy August, with thighs and eyes to
match, and September
Diving into blue October, dour November, and deadly dull
December which now
And then with a surprised blank look produces from its
hand the ace of trumps
Or sets within the ice-white hairline of a new moon the
gibbous rest:
Global, blue, Columbian, a blue dull, definite and thin as
the first day
Of February when, in the steamed and freezing capital
cash built
Without a plan to be its own best monument its skyline
set in stacks

Like poker chips (signed: "Autodidact"), at the crux of a
view there crosses
A flatcar-trailer piled with five of the cheaper sort of yachts,
tarpaulined,
Plus one youth in purple pants, a maid in her uniform and an
"it's not real
Anything" Cossack hat and coat, a bus one quarter full of
strangers, and
The other familiar fixings of lengthening short days: "He's
outgrown them
Before you can turn around" and see behind you the
landscape of the past
Where beached boats bask and the terraced cliffs are hung
with oranges
Among dark star-gleaming leaves and descending the
dizzying rough stairs
Littered with goat turd beads—such packaging—you—he—
she—
One—someone—stops to break off a bit of myrtle and
recite all the lines
Of Goethe that come back, and those in French,
"Connais-tu...?" the air
Fills with chalk dust from banged erasers, behind the
February dunes
Ice-boats speed and, among the reeds, there winds a little
frozen stream
Where kids in kapok ice skate and play at Secret City as
the sun
Sets before dinner, the snow on fields turns pink and under
the hatched ice
The water slides darkly and over it a never before seen
liquefaction of the sun
In a chemical yellow greener than sulphur a flash of
petroleum by-product
Unbelievable, unwanted and as lovely as though someone
you knew all your life
Said the one inconceivable thing and then went on washing
dishes: the sky

Flows with impersonal passion and loosening jet trails (eyes
tearing from the cold)
And on the beach, between the foam frozen in a thick
scalloped edging so like
Weird cheek mottling pillow case embroidery, on the
water-darkened sand the waves
Keep free of frost a gull strangles on a length of nylon fish
line and the dog
Trots proudly off, tail held high, to bury a future dinner
among cut grass on a dune:
The ice boats furl their sails and all pile into cars and go off
to the supermarket
Its inviting foods and cleansers sold under tunes with
sealed-in memory flavor
“Hot House Rhubarb” “White Rock Girl” “Citrus
Futures” “Cheap Bitter Beans” and
In its parking lot vast as the kiss to which is made the most
complete surrender
In a setting of leaves, backs of stores, a house on a rise
admired for being
Somewhat older than some others (prettier, too?) a man in
a white apron embraces a car
Briefly in the cold with his eyes as one might hug oneself
for warmth for love
—What a paint job, smooth as an eggplant; what a meaty
chest, smooth as an eggplant
—Is it too much to ask your car to understand you? the
converse isn’t and the sky
Maps out new roads so that, driving at right angles to the
wind, clouds in ranks
Contrive in diminishing perspective a part of a picture
postcard of a painting
Over oak scrub where a filling station has: gas, a locked
toilet (to keep dirt in)
A busted soda pop machine, no maps and “I couldn’t tell
you *that*” so
The sky empties itself to a color, there, where yesterday’s
puddle

Offers its hospitality to people-trash and nature-trash in
tans and silvers
And black grit like that in corners of a room in this or that
cheap dump
Where the ceiling light burns night and day and we stare at
or into each
Other's eyes in hope the other reads there what he reads:
snow, wind
Lifted; black water, slashed with white, and that which is,
which is beyond
Happiness or love or mixed with them or more than they
or less, unchanging change,
"Look," the ocean said (it was tumbled, like our sheets)
"Look in my eyes"

The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium

Harry Mathews

PART FOUR

XLIII

September 24

The day after I last wrote, Hodge called to say that Mr. Hood had left town for a few days; until he returned I should keep the briefcase. I had resisted tampering with the elegant box, but this evening I tried the clasp, which was unlocked. Inside I found the June issue of *Tel Quel*, a tube of H-Preparation, several five-figure checks, and a six-by-eight inch card on which a grid of letters had been typed, over the legend: "Cipher for Amortonelli Location."

You can guess my emotions.

(A withered palm tree is sketched on the back of the card. A cross marks a spot near its roots.)

We must work quicker. I enclose money for your trip, if you still want to make it. But should your friends prove unrewarding, waste no more time on them.

If you do go to the Mugello, don't be dismayed by the wind and the chilly springs. Why in this season are they going to a mountain spa? It will be deserted, except for my hot ghost. Your refusal to write me as I asked hasn't lessened my need. I won't press the point, because I dread seeming repulsive. How often have I imagined you seated by a window, your

head bent, wondering whether a certain "Zachary" is worth the affection showered on him—and you take up your bed and go home. How could I stop you? It is in you that "our" life exists. For instance, it is you and not I who make me attractive to you! This is why I long, even if only in a fiction, for bodily involvement—I want to share your redeeming view of me. I have so often relived our few nights together that they have sunk to the level of racial memory. I need new grist. Do you still not wear a bra?

This second virginity is even stupider than the first. I like it no more than you do. I like it even less than the red of my ink on this egg-hued stationery.

"The Waste Land" is a much anthologized war poem by a turn-of-the-century symbolist called Eliot—not George.

XLIV

29 sept.

Now I 'm in Rostolena. (Do you know, this was some of Averardo's propriety, when he is dead, that goes to Cosimo?) Now, speed letteres at Albergo Terme Paradiso e Fango.

I wish you, not-fear for my reliance. I belive that to not exite by un-point-ed talk, 's best. Yet, o my love-man, it shall-be un-true when I say, I did not miss you terrify, and long-ing to-see-you. And here my poor gift to your peace, a 3° Zen story, of-such you dilect:

In the *po* test by whiwhich the 6° arch of zen was chose, there were poems. One say, "Dis-like roil dust. The probes remove the dust." The "head wing" poems are their. It said, "He 's the mind. Where, is dust?" Some lat-er Pan masters: a monk who was stak-ing bats, a young-er monk up to his id in the dust—"Are you a-staking-bats?" "No. Why?"

Then I think, to homfrot you more, of our massim: *Ticbaï slop*, in front of non-happiness, *atra-pok-atra*, think n't, *me-me*, be so, *nob lucri maï*, as-to eat the Now, *wuc Lao*, like the Lao-tians. "Ticbaï slop, atra-pok-atra, me-me nob lucri maï wuc Lao." Slow, you may take-on my tongue, like I your. Yet, it

is here the feel-ing to be retaint, less the tongue-lesser.

The post-hard show any of the pittoresque basket work, of this the regional sheep boys are giust-ly famos.

XLV

October 5

Three days ago Miles Hood returned to Miami. Hodge drove me downtown to meet him early that afternoon. I said nothing about the briefcase, although it's painful being a crow with D.H.

The encounter took place at a new Chock Full O'Nuts. The café, almost empty at that hour, was bright with cool fake sunshine. Mr. Hood was at a corner table. As we approached, his three gnomelike attendants popped up in front of us. Smoothing their Blücher-red neckties, the crescents of their eyebrows rising as one, they welcomed us with a unison "Hi there!" Hodge greeted Mr. Hood familiarly and introduced me. I handed over the case. Mr. Hood opened it and beamed. Murmuring an excuse, he verified the contents, testing the checks with a pocket-sized magnetic device. Finally Mr. Hood asked with a smile, "Where's the milk of magnesia?"

Frappes were served. While the two men chatted, I tried to catch the mutterings of the bodyguards seated behind me. "...the fat one looks like a big con type." I smiled. "Uh uh. He's a friend of Mr. Hodge." "But the boss is such an easy mark, anyone might try to take him." I turned to look at them. They were leaning forward, their heads together but twisted in different directions, so that their eyes appeared to be staring at odd corners of the room.

Meanwhile Messrs. Hodge and Hood were having a jolly reunion. The backclapping ended at last, and Mr. Hood turned to me. "What can I do for this gentleman? Have a check?" He fanned out the three papers toward me like a benign conjuror. Prudence stifled desire. "Well, let's meet next week and work something out."

There matters rested. I'm glad the decisive moment is postponed. I shall prepare myself as thoroughly as possible for it. I swear that I shall try to act the sensible man and not the simpleton.

How does this predicament look to you, in your remote and dismal village? (The young man on the postcard is remarkable.) The "comforts" you sent me, if not the ones I craved, did wonders. On the day you wrote them, the infernal slope I had been climbing leveled off. Your distant magic was at work, mysterious as your Zen tale. I would like to repeat unceasingly the blessing of your name. Who else ever brightened my glooms? Your words are my fixed itinerary of rescue—you are to me, dear Twang, more than a wife, more than a sister: the pilgrim's distant shrine.

XLVI

October 10

As you do with the gentlemen Hodge and Hood, I look at it it is good. You are to remember, you know very, they may be not. And, they'll talk their little, so to have your more. Thus, aspect. It's how, I do with my friens.

You have not the true image of Rostolena village, not "deserte" no "dismal", no, they are many many here, with money, gewels, and c., very gay al-so. It is, the mud and skin festival. The springs not cold, theyr heat warm-ing all the houses and houstels, and not only, but the ways, that are cover with glass; the grottas too many and grand, in them is a risto-raunt and sauna-dance circles, very live. So, palms trees are grow a-long the walks and a deal of flowers, like the example of Buddle plants, its seed lodges in all cornices and in window embracures that even so late the cascarades of lillac flowr tumbaling down the palace facades and sprung from coigns. In them some bird sit and sing, I see two robin red chest last morning. And so they carry all clothes of summer. That is funny, with the of-health mode now followed, that of "de-coctions of malt": these ladies, most rich and full of speech of

great intellett, but a-round the small good clothes big blue stripes on the skins. Yet not Twang, I use but the *lai*, good mud, the ash of a volcano misched with argil, this is very sexual. Also I may be try the hure with sassoline.

This night I aet in the grott with Bonzo and the Prince Voltic. This one, is very mild and cold. He will talk, only of work (Medici). I answer of my grand knowledge, *nai sheenam*, so I bear it. After, with Bonzo I have learned the Hunch, that novel dance, it 's not easy, for the Pindola likes the shout-ing as he dance of commands, so: "All-right, now, with-control abandon!" At last, I made an error catastrophie yet delight-ful, I giump 6 steps to rihgt not left. The all line of dancers fall-ing, Twang blush orange, then each laughed and kiss me (even those girls.)

Here I 'm back, to write-it. You must think now, I 'm not here in "glooms", it may be not the garden of Intuitive Illuminazion, but, it is pleasant. Still I 'm, dear one, a little in-drink but, at every time, your faith-full wife; and now, send you a love-ly *posti*.

XLVII

October 16

When, at cocktail time two days ago, I arrived at the Hood estate, Dexter Hodge was leaving. We had been invited together, but other appointments had obliged him to come early. I did not mind; I wanted to scout the subject of the "Amortonelli location," and Dexter's absence would make this easier.

The three henchmen took me through a wing of the main house onto an immeasurable lawn. There, at the foot of the chapel tower, Mr. Hood welcomed me. It was a pleasant evening, cool, with a half moon peeping through the boughs of wisteria that embraced the round walls above us.

Mr. Hood's smiling face was imprisoned in an antique helmet, without beaver or visor, apparently of gold. It gave him a lionish countenance. He said, "It's a seventeenth century

morion, from a Spanish hoard one of my teams dug up. Look at the nifty artwork." His teams? Astonished, I tried to do as he said, and noted at the helmet's crest the figure of a long-tressed nereid emerging from ranks of fish scales. (Hodge cannot be ignorant of Mr. Hood's interest in treasure-hunting. Why has he never mentioned it to me?)

A siren sounded distantly. Mr. Hood removed his helmet while, materializing like a genie on the empty sward, a beautiful young woman proffered him a telephone on a coral tray. Mr. Hood lifted the receiver, listened, and said, "No—thirteen million." Phone and secretary vanished.

We sat down. Mr. Hood thanked me warmly for returning the stolen briefcase. The contents were worth far more than I could imagine—"The checks were nothing." He wanted to reward me.

He spoke with a gentle finality that made me awkward. But I was prepared for the offer and stuttered out my refusal, explaining that for a friend of Dexter Hodge's the notion of "service rendered" was out of place. I had behaved as he would towards me in similar circumstances.

"But such circumstances are unlikely to arise, hence my initiative," Mr. Hood replied. "I appreciate your courtesy, a quality Dex has praised in you. Allow me to say, however, that it is not only courtesy that makes you refuse. You are exhibiting the modesty of the somewhat poor. You aren't poor of course, but you aren't rich, and so you feel obliged to show that you are not interested in acquiring money, especially mine. You should be. A few extra bumblebees never hurt."

I had drawn breath to answer when something behind me crashed softly to the ground, turning me to salt with fright. Mr. Hood reassured me: it was only a little Malay dragon that had dropped from the tower vines.

Less at ease than ever, I lamely explained that I would "prefer esteem to charity." Mr. Hood interrupted:

"The fact is that I am in your debt. And debts must be paid. One day you may discover how great this debt is and simply have me thrown in jail!"

How is it that the potentates of this world always enlist

unreason as their invincible ally? This preposterous suggestion completely disarmed me. By its superb improbability, it established that it was I who was in debt to him: that Mr. Hood was an invested king, and I a fool.

I sat speechless. Mr. Hood came to my aid.

"I understand your reluctance to take what might appear to be a handout. There are other possibilities—a collaboration that would benefit both of us? I have many enterprises here that need intelligent and scrupulous supervision. Radium wells in the mangrove swamps, the dwarf-cattle ranch in the north, treasure-hunting teams—you name it."

An incredulous giggle escaped me. Speaking as calmly as I could, I said I would think the matter over. We set a "serious business appointment" for early November, then, to my inexpressible joy, the interview ended.

The meeting left me in such agitation that I can still hardly think. I have asked myself if Mr. Hood wasn't taking a vicious pleasure in "telling me the tale," but that is impossible. It's only that his offer of working on the treasure team seems too good to be true. I suffer intensely over encounters like this, which so thoroughly confirm my clumsiness. How can I face men who weave self-control, shrewdness, and (in this case) generosity into a seamless raiment of efficient character? I should prepare myself better. Next time I'll memorize responses for all eventualities. I shall clothe myself in the "trousers of stealth, the jacket of patience, and the hat of foresight." It is the cold sweat of action that ruins me. What I lack, beloved, is your excellent creed, which would have taught me that mountains are as short-lived as grass, and let me daily eat—or would a Buddhist say spit out?—the bread of immortality.

Your mistake in dancing the Hunch made me laugh, for, fancy this, much the same thing happened when I first tried it. I hopped those six steps in one spot; the consequences were identical. Such incidents can be annoying, due as they are to inattention. I'm glad it didn't make you furious. That would be far more unbecoming than a mere physical blunder, especially in a woman.

XLVIII

Octob. 21

How good that is, to be with the Hood's teams. Thus it's best: others pay, others work-ing, and we rich. And here also it is a progression. The Prince is taken the Pindola to a job for him. He'll aid, in the sell of the Medicean remains. Now Bonzo can better do, that Twang next be in-ployed.

Other ways they are not new events. Eccept, the graet in-gathering of free dogs at this villagge—thousand and thousand. They are nice, they emit large gioivial noise. It is re-minding me nights-time in Sah Leh Khot—also of an even-ing in the spring-season, at Florence, of the “maggio musicale” (yet it was june, still with name “may”). Have I recountt this? The Bonzo invites me. There was a choral of dogs, very-wise dogs train for song in Hangover (Germania), and their spezial music by Egg, a hantata in new-Bach stile, saying “Vorkelt nicht, berühmte Nasen.” It's splendor, in the end yet it is just more art of the west. Only I like your opera, be cause that is true: it is, those who make it have not the care, are they insincere. One've give the prema of one opera, “Robinson Caruso”, it is pop with the italians also with Twang.

Then how goe Mr. Dharmabody?

Here have see no opera, but yesterday a U.S. film, *nob sheenam ghanap*, so that I pass the hours. It was near 20 years of old, with stars Day and Jourdan. Doris and Louis are alive together in a on-beach house at the Monte Rey Beach, and he have much free time after performing duties as famed concerto pianost and compostor of concerti in the Gershwind-style, much free time to conspire to hill Doris! Thus she must run of and she is become a air bus stewardessa. But on a day he have manage to sneaker up on a plane whewhere she's hostess-ing, and—o my!

Now it's deep night. It is a little cold but soon I'll be sung in bed. Warm with over-saying the one thought “we all ways,” *theu tharai, theu tharai*

XLIX

October 27

I'm at a barbecue given by Lester Greek in his in-town orchard. It's part of Les's campaign for congress. The guests include the invisible order of Miami authority, with lesser figures like me to fill out the boost.

Miles Hood came to the party, but I missed him. When he arrived I was away by the fire, over which seven lambs—or more likely rams—turn on a steam-powered spit. The roasting is supervised by a Gypsy-like attendant with ruby earrings, who carves with a tremendous shiv while sprinkling the sputtering meat with crystalline oil, scooped from a trundled amphora. I had decided to abandon this mouth-watering scene for Mr. Hood when Dexter Hodge intercepted me. He pestered me with attention, as though trying to ingratiate himself, and none too subtly. He may wonder what took place during my meeting with Mr. Hood: he acted slightly resentful of my interest in him. After I had unsuccessfully waved a few times to the little millionaire, he asked, "Isn't my company good enough?" He followed this lapse with praise of his friend. "Miles is truly class. Yesterday he told me that he had learned his butler was stealing his cigars. 'What did you do about it?' I asked. 'Nothing.' 'Nothing? Isn't stealing cigars stealing?' 'If I dislike sharing my cigars with my butler I can lock them up. I can't lead him into temptation and then ruin him.'"

Soon afterward he started off. "I think I'll do a little hopscotching and take some election bets," he said jokingly, or half-jokingly. Then—are there depths of sulfur beneath his crust?—wagging a finger at me: "Remember that the first-born of created things is, by identity, the first-born among the dead." In the smokeless metallic light of the salted fire these cryptic words made him quite sinister. Have I glimpsed the Invisible Jesuit?

I took a third helping and gandered around. It was hard finding company, since everyone was talking shop. I didn't mind. With that sordid crowd of busy faces around me,

politicking and manipulating stocks, I thought, All my ambition, all my wealth is love! I felt like a salamander thriving in fire. Then I went indoors, found some writing paper and a drink, sat down at a table overlooking the orchard, and began this letter.

You ask about Mr. Dharmabody. The little skeezix couldn't be better. I brought him with me tonight so that he could romp. He hasn't been out much lately, and has severe belly sag, almost scraping the ground—a dangerous condition in our concrete world.

Your letter convinced me that I've been foolishly pessimistic. Mr. Hood's offer is a stroke of luck. It is unlikely that he knows much about our treasure; probably he has had it routinely investigated as a well-known lost hoard, without an inkling of its history. So I shall put his organization to work for us and draw a handsome salary doing it.

I write among dancing, singing, whooping, hollering, and drinking. I think I shall succeed. My darling, I love you to death.

L

october 31

So the progress ends, as the prince have choose, that Twang will n't work with him. He want "wite people." Yet, *ticbui pristwi pok mem nai vin*—In front of a (bad) demone I do n't be the corpse, you say so, "lie down and die down"? It's n't over, no *not*. Thus whewhen the Pindola toll it to me I but laughh, say-ing: Nice, jiust the to-be with you (him). And, litlte later, I unhover his eyes balls with: "O sad, I have no capitale, just the fruits of my trusty fund." "O, that is no much?" "O no, sole-ly 5 or 10 thousand lbs. every year." He will have wish to say, hohow much that he is loving me, but the money-think has detract his voice. I hold-him.

Twang yes have one regreg, the work will have give her some cush (cash?) for a more-soft hotel, and this is so small a plaint, I mind not any post to live, that is O. K.

LI

Nov. 6

You cannot imagine the rage yours put me into. It is unbearable that you receive such treatment. It's as bad as calling you gook, and not even to your face, the blockhead! Who does he think he is? Does he think the winds and seas obey him for his moldy title?

Anyway I'm sending you extra cash (*or* cush—it's the same) for a better hotel.

My business appointment with Mr. Hood took place three days ago. I had plenty of time for rehearsals, and for their spawn: new reasons to worry.

The three guards led me into the bowels of the palace, far from the lawns of our first interview. We found Mr. Hood in a windowless room whose walls were hung with old lutes. He was swinging in a deep hammock, concealed except for one tiny protruding hand, which beat time to a ditty that a young man, on a nearby stool, sang to the plunking of a mandoline:

A fine rain anoints the canal machinery...

At the final chord Mr. Hood rolled into view, handed the singer some folded bills with a word of thanks, and nodded him from our presence. He then took me by the arm, and with a silent, expansive gesture invited me to admire the splendors about us.

This began a tour of Mr. Hood's indoor domain, or at least that part of it devoted to scholarship. We visited a room where students were repairing prints of old movies, among them an early lost Laurel; another where three ham sets busily whined—one operator announced excitedly, "I've got the Dahomey *Die Schwärmer!*"; a third where a battery of computers blinked away at translations of middle Bactrian; and at last the immense library, where many young people were at work. Mr. Hood explained their tasks as we circled the room. "...clear text of Boethius... fodder for my theoretical teas... Chomskian refutations.... Here is the star of the show."

In a soundproofed cubicle a blond girl, who bore an uncanny resemblance to Hyperion Scarparo, was reading aloud from a propped tome. At Mr. Hood's tap she opened the glass door to say, "Rehearsing Mommsen, sir." Mr. Hood motioned to the three ever-present attendants, who conjured champagne and glasses from a set of Melanie Klein. Mr. Hood pressed a glass on the young woman: "Mustn't let you get hoarse." Then, to me: "Every day she reads to me from the classics of history. It is an *heure sacrée*."

From the library we entered a little drawing room, where we sat down. The three guards left. Mr. Hood asked if as a professional librarian I would like to take charge of his study center. I replied that I had considered his proposals and chosen the treasure teams as the most interesting. He assented to this with no sign of either pleasure or displeasure, and launched into an explanation of how the business was organized. I expected him to indicate how I might fit into it; no such luck. At the end of his account Mr. Hood stood up and offered politely to see me to the door. So I asked him what sort of work I was to do.

"Oh, there's no rush about that, we'll come to that in good time. Just think of yourself as one of us, starting now."

On the way out, Mr. Hood stopped by a small showcase where on a bed of black swan feathers Mallarmé's left ulna reposed. "When it arrived I had it brought up the drive in a royal Egyptian litter, surrounded by musicians performing the death scene from *Socrate*. A banner day."

Farther on, in a capacious niche, stood the primitive, half-size statue of a horse. Its outstretched forelegs and cringing head were full of unhorselike obeisance. One eye was painted, the other was a rosy globe of crystal. An alarm clock was set in its brow; long cracks spread out from it.

"It's adobe," Mr. Hood explained. "It was made by a noted wizard of the West, Bernheim Wood. He once visited my childhood home on the Rappahannock. For some reason he was very taken with me and gave me the horse. That day I stopped growing. The sculpture has no beauty, but in that glass eye is stored tremendous scrying power. I often use it.

There's always something going on, it's like a twenty-four hour movie." He peered into the glass eye. "There's a lady in a sari digging old papers with a spade. I met her once in Rome. A handsome fellow is helping her. I know him too. As a matter of fact, he works for me. Take a gander." I saw nothing but faint pink tracery. In a tone of regret Mr. Hood said, "It's because you don't believe. You don't understand."

It is said that at Lester Greek's party Mr. Hood pulled off the deal of his career.

I left feeling saddened by Mr. Hood's establishment, or by his role in it. He is too much the master; his kindness is always tainted by condescension. For instance, he handed out money not only to the singer but to the workers in the other rooms. It's hard to imagine Hodge so pretentious—although I find Mr. Hood much nicer than Hodge. Perhaps the richest people feel obliged to behave this way.

I've been wondering whether my angry words about the Prince weren't a mistake—whether a temperate view might not be best. I say this not only because I naturally tend to peacefulness, but because his rejection may have been simply meant to increase your desire for the job, at filling you with "admiring fear" so as to get you cheap. He may also think that you have not shown the respect due his station. I understand you in this; but I also feel that we are bound to honor those who deserve it, which sometimes means those who expect it. So don't give him up; cultivate him a little.

Perhaps my own fear has produced this watery advice—the unfamiliar fear of being left stranded. As I see more of my new friends, I understand them less. I ask what is to stop them from some day tossing me to passing fishes?

But what other reasons could the Prince have for treating you so shoddily?

I'm sitting in my library cell, swaddled in silence. Election Day has emptied the building. After this letter I must start work on a lecture: next week, I am to address the Knights on "My Visit to the Far East." I shall enjoy telling them about you and other matters crucial to Miami life.

So long for now.

LII

Nov. 10

You mild concil is to late. Went to Prince Voltic table and spake in a big public sound. I 've say godbye *duvai tharaï* for ever to that one! I say, first, Italy is a moundain of *lai* mud. Then Florenze is *dhum pristwei vini*, so, as a stingk of demon's horpse. The cultura is no thing, only for balance of pagments. I say those opere of Verdi and Pucci are *uüax*. I say, Duccio was a pornograph and Fra Angelico is a jew. Then, his grand mother is a cooked egg, his mother is a post-nose drip. At last I call him a hommunist and one hommosessuale. The Voltic is be come red then white then gone. Follow an other storm. Bonzo is much angry, say, Twang has not to risch his job, for the soddifaction of try-ing on names that fits.

Thus, I have n't power to "cultivate the prince" or, "deal with him" in some way. And, he has all wear-out my wanting to pleace or dis-please him.

I leaft Rostolena village, a round, there was ballons of smoke from the bomb fires, oh I like to eat it. Here I 'm with-in a comfy pension, in Florence. I have sistemate, all my notings from MAP bags at the library here. I bring my learning up to day.

Do you remembem, the de Roover think, there will have to-be a heir to *Francesco di Averardo*, be cause the personal possessions are not gone to *Cosimo*. Then, this heir shall still wish to have the treasure. For this I look all the mentions of tresure after 1443 (that year *Francesco* died.) That all most get me ready for the nut bin. Mr. de Roover know where they are the libri segreti (counting books), but other doluments in MAP are mangled with one the other, it is like, a mattman do it with porpose. Yet, these days are n't guasted. If many names are named near the treasure, one onely came back, in year and out year. This is: *Salvestro Sguardofisso*. He have have stories with i Medici, I do not recount these now, it is just the matter, he persersist toward the gold and I thought, it is him the her. How ever that name wring no bell. I leave MAP and consolt the State Arhives. The 2nd name (Sguardo-fisso) had no ante cedents it shall be a knack kname may be. I find him —on elettoral list, San Giovanni quarter, 1443-1466. It 's a good sign,

S. Giovanni is of dominating class, and of *Francesco di Averardo*'s family. I cearch more on, at the end I find this list of the "arroti" in the Balia of '58, on this *Salvestro* is wrote not *Salvestro Sguardofisso* no not even *Salvestro di Francesco Sguardofisso* yet *Salvestro di Francesco di Giuliano Sguardofisso*! So it is secure he is of those cousin Medici, I was right. Mr. de Roover is right.

But then, why is he not said, as of Medici? Why not, as *Francesco*'s hereditor? Who was his mamma? If were a fine lady, it shall be hid, that *Francesco* were the father. If she were low, he can have adapt the child, even marry this woman, even more get her annulld if she is espoused al-ready, with his great power. Yet not this nor that. So it is one soluzion, that the mother is *Francesco*'s slave.

I can not tell of it now, Twang has such hunger, now down to the dinning room. It shall be in a new letter.

Now I'm turned. O my *lemu* & *neng* I am to night much in thoought of you. I ete a lone. Of ten I am drinking you healthy, so I can say, I'm "deadrunk" for you're sake, this is better as, "I die for you," I think.

LIII

November 14

The Knights held their scheduled meeting, but without my lecture. I was very disappointed. There's no doubt they're exceptionally busy: it's the season when they must organize the parades for the Miami pre-Lenten carnival. The forthcoming one has its special problems. Last February a festival barge, burdened with two hundred frolickers, sank in the lagoon, thus reopening the problem of safety hazards. In addition there have been complaints about the theoretical structuring of the pageants.

Hours of discussion resulted in no specific plans. During the intense and sometimes dazzling crossfire, I contributed no more than a requested yes or no. But when it was decided that the difficulty of our problem demanded "superior enlightenment," I found myself picked for the inquiry. The methods used were better suited to the Egyptian Temple than to the

Knights: we held a Shakespearian lottery. I was chosen by the childish rhyme "Eenie meenie minie moe, Catch a bugger by his toe," and told to open a volume of the poet's works at random, reading out the first words to catch my eye:

"Exeunt omnes."

The Knights were bemused. They decided that we must next consult the municipal mascots: a family of porpoises that lived in a vast glass cube within the floating museum of maritime replicas. We drove to the harbor and found the sprightly creatures sporting about the oars of a trireme. My companions studied their gyrations with great seriousness.

Perhaps I would have been sympathetic to these eccentricities had it not been for an incident that occurred before the meeting came to order. I had looked forward to seeing Mr. Hood, but he was absent. Instead, Hodge delivered a note from him. Mr. Hood said he was still unable to see me, but I could work things out with his "confidant Dex Hodge." Hodge was watching me with an unpleasant smile.

I had wanted to bypass Hodge: his knowing air showed that he had guessed as much and was pleased to have outmaneuvered me. As if to aggravate my disappointment, he began lecturing me about my appearance, looking at me as if I were some kind of dogheaded-abortion as he addressed cruel words to points of my dress and physique.

So when the Knights finally disbanded, I drove home to my bathroom mirror. The view depressed me. My five-month styte peered back at me from a garnishing of permanent spots—as for the rest of my outward being, I'll skip the details, even though you might view them with charity. I used to think that I should remind you of myself, that I should *make* you see me. I did not then understand that love is better than sight and will do without it.

Reflection helped me from the depths. I thought, it is better to have the nettles sprouting in one's face than in one's mind. Slowly I cheered up. I decided to relegate Hodge's meanness to the category of past accidents, to face whatever the future would bring—which at that moment was a party at Dan's. I spruced up, set my sails resolutely, and cast off into the evening.

I've told you what Dan's parties are like. This was the exception. I felt it the minute I walked in. The air abounded in that unstrident gaiety which we call natural but which is no more natural than waltzing. Dan had installed his Kooflare, a low calorie fireplace that has brought inhabitants of hot climates the pleasures of the hearth. Made of coal-colored stone, with fire spouts in the shapes of mushrooms, it bathed the room in friendly light. There were few guests at the start, but among them were long-lost acquaintances, and I was amazed how much I liked seeing them. I was a great success, too. My old friends were full of admiration for my recent socializing. Dexter Hodge had brought a troop of pretty raggles, and I hit it off with them like Dean Martin, conversationally, of course. This was balsam to my wounds. Dex was his old affable self, treating me royally.

Late in the evening Dan gave us stork steaks cooked, I think, with speed, because the party turned wild. People kept swarming in. In the confusion Dan bit Dex and some other guy got punched up. But I escaped intact.

Lester Greek was elected to congress by a large majority, winning the "content" as well as the "form" vote.

On my way home, I plucked the enclosed from a wayside bush, forced into unseasonal gaudiness for the greater glory of Greater Miami.

LIV

novem-bre 18

Ah! my pointsetter blossom! Dou you know, I hatch my self with to-pity for that you gathered it, with this premise of summer on-it. There is too room for the toes of some bird. Still I'll keep it longer than it shall not have stay on the bush, that is very sure.

Your speech of the fests, *nam me slop*, in this is non-happiness, *wey!* for I will have been to the great cerebation in my capital, of the Namma Ghaï (it is "royal shrine"—*namma* mostwise is the hut shrines of peasants make from bamboughs,

but this one is all from mud breaks and piastre, then guilt.) It has been this week. It shall be no matter.

Then my belove I shall bring to the honsider-ing of your aspect no ciarity but admoration, all is good even the spots which I look-on for gewels. But one thing (perhaps), you are a little very fat. Yet I know, you have try to slender down, and that will happen. I, shall not force you to that, it is so clear. I remember my unkle munk as he talks to some Lao's (some Laotians) of to-not-eat-much, he needed not to forze them, his exsample of haleth and sense was so cleer, he had the knead only to draugh their attention to this point. That was like a wagging well-joked with the hwip handy that wait on a flat ground. It 's at a crisscrossroads, a intelligent driver mounts and he know to driver the horses. He take the reins in the left and the whap in the right and he diriges the hart here, there, whewhere he wish. So you *ticbai pristwe*, turning against the demons, those of cunger, drive your senses clever-like, separe your self from that what is bad and lead toward the just conditions of the brain, for in this road you 'll make grow in you and strong the Doctrine and the Diet.

In my life there is again change. For the Pindola beg me, think not the Prince so evil, and he first beg the Prince, think Twang is not so evil. The Prince cedes, Twang may then work beneath him, but he will have "series referenizes of haracter and onesty." These, I can ask of the Mrs de Roover. Yet I do not decide. I shall go one again to that bath station Rostolena and think, and write to you more about whewhence come *Salvestro*.

LV

November 22

Good news at last: good as gold. Mr. Hood is making me a *partner* in his treasure corporation. I can't wait to turn out as dallier in the prairies of abundance.

The news was doubly sweet since it followed new nastiness from Hodge. Yesterday afternoon the Knights visited a master

weaver's shop; we were to choose fabrics for the carnival parades. Hodge picked me up, and on the way grilled me in a fashion more suited to a heavy gee than to a man of the world. He questioned my motives in going to work for Mr. Hood (as if it had been my idea), and cast doubt on my qualifications in a very rude way. And then he asked me about the "so-called Amortadella treasure." I instinctively corrected him, thus revealing my knowledge of it. And what were the chances of finding it? I thought them impossible, since there were no maps. This apparently satisfied him.

It didn't satisfy me; during the visit, to recover from my panic, I stayed clear of the other Knights. Loitering in the shop near one old-fashioned contraption, I was addressed by its attendant. He explained that it was a device for "throwing" silk—for twisting strands of raw silk into usable threads. The machine consisted of two concentric drum-shaped frames, a fixed outer one and an inner one that turned on its axis like a revolving door: just like an old Florentine *torcitoio*. (*Torcere* also means to throw.)

The Knights returned from their tour. When he saw me, Mr. Hood took me aside. He announced my partnership with evident pleasure. I mumbled a protest or two, which Mr. Hood waved away. I emphasized my lack of experience and, particularly my ignorance of the Amortonelli treasure. Mr. Hood exclaimed, "That's of *no* importance."

Then why, I wondered, had Dexter Hodge brought it up? I believe Mr. Hood. It's Hodge's role that I question and, I admit, resent. Yet at that moment Hodge acted in a way that disarmed me. To celebrate my promotion he offered me a night on the town, with the full treatment—dinner at the Fontainebleau, the Monkey Jungle Baths, parties, the works. Elated as I was, I accepted, and that evening we had a merry time. Dex organized an *ad hoc* gathering for cocktails; then, after a wine-drenched meal, we went semi-invited to a fancy bash on the ocean front, whence I had to be half-carried elsewhere, though I'm not sure where elsewhere was. "Ah, but a man's reach must exceed his grasp..." I ended here in Dex's private sauna, where consciousness is vertiginously reasserting

its claim, and where I'm trying to write you with this dripping ball-point. I do remember refusing the Baths, which are really a glorified panel store. Of course I didn't want "a" woman.

It's hard to keep my thoughts from the success that awaits us. I can't see how we can fail. I shall have access to what my partners know, and this in conjunction with our own information may be all we need. Besides, I shall learn of *other* treasures and be able to claim a share. Does this materialistic optimism seem foolish to you? I swear that I desire wealth only for peace; not to swagger among men, but to secure my own apple tree in which to swing unseen.

As for my "very fatness": until last night I had kept strict tabs on myself. I wear up to seven layers of clothing, including a winter coat (ludicrous here), and jog every day in this attire until I can breathe no more. I take hot baths. I sweat for hours, reeking of baked salt, under that hottest sunlamp the sun. I eat only a quarter pound of red meat every twenty-four hours. No breakfast, no supper, just one meal and some apple snacks. No liquor except for a rare glass of Bass. Sometimes I take a strong laxative. By these means you can almost make out my bottom rib, and my clothes have been taken in *half a yard*. Do you approve of me now? Of course, there's lots left.

Your turnabout with Prince Voltic saddened me; I mean on your account. The task I imposed has brought you this humiliation. Your perseverance would set an example for the disciples of Achaia and Thessalonica, and I appreciate your selflessness with wonder and pride. I know that our work has been dull and its results, so far, insignificant. But like the black-mustard seed, once it takes root it will grow so high as to dominate the garden, and all the birds of heaven will find room to nest in it.

LVI

Novembrr 26

Why do you not expressed no interest, in that I tell you of *Salvestro*? and his mother, that I find to have be a sclave? I

wait during two letters, yet now I tell you anyway, you are able to take it or live it.

I learn, all in Florence keep some slave then, who had two bits of money. Thus too the plain preasts and the monkess, the church admit the trafic, when it is unfaithfuls who be boaght and sold. These are spedited in ships many many from Black Sea and Alexandria, in Italy they are soon a pane in the head, the Petrarc names them the "household enemies." Yet not the mamma of *Salvestro*, was of-none the enemy (maybe, not-wanting, of *Cosimo*?) Beautiful—"bellissimma di viso con un busto assai adatto," this isn't hommon because most of those slaves have little pocks and then the hwites of the West slashing their face or pric a tatoo so you can tell them if they scape.

They give to the mother a name *Mantissa*. I have found the bill of her sell to *Francesco*, 15 febb. 1431, with this name and her years 25, and those words of her beuty, also: "Since she is perched by the breaker (*sensale*) one week agone, she's had no harm," and speek of "care of previous owner well hognized to all us" but without some name, or hint of who 's; and the price 60 florins that is much.

Otherway (I shall say below) I find *Salvestro* born in the november of that year, has the *Francesco* jump upon her like a hot dog? However he is not a beast if he have done that, he had to-want a son so long, then he's assolute kind to her, to the son. And, his spose dies: he waits, the decent wait-time, then he freeze quickly *Mantissa*, I have this act: "Mister and slave presenting in the chambers of notary, her liberty was conscended because she has served him with sollecitude and as the laws. Kneeling front of her master *more priscum et antiquorum servando* she places her hands withinside his hands and implore him with the most great veneration and humiliation to befree her as in the roman use; after this her master let fly her hands, said, Be fre, be the Roman citizen, freed from some and all servitude to-me. I notary present draw up the deed. And she 's that free as she is born from a family free."

Then, truble. *Francesco* want to make the birth of *Salvestro* legitimate and so he will adopt him. In the church some said, no, *Mantissa* was not your amateur wife whewhen this boy is born, still your old wife was there, only with a regular honcubine in your house *non ut famula sed ut uxor* can it be adoption. All right, so this mater needs the Arcibisp's dispense; *Francesco* will go to him, I think it is *Antonino*. But

this one must "consulk with who has intelligence of the soject, and in church and in lay, he must talk of course to the Priorate of the state." And, divine whowho dominoes the priorate? It is *Cosimo*, *duvaī tharāi* to that hope!

But *Francesco* will interpose an appeal; then too soon he's dead. He shall have give to the mother and the son his cash, his light belongings, yet could not his great lands and houses and they go to the cousims. Any months before that he dies there was the election (of '43), there was new rule and he can push *Salvestro* into the first grup of handidates. You know, this is that time when the incluse not just those seduti & veduti but their relatives and it means sons and grandsons there, so *Salvestro* after this is in some political bodies. He has not true strength yet a distinction, with this he's going on to argue with *Cosimo* about the treasure, his tesoro dei tre sciarrani.

That is something, that is enough.

You are content with the going to work for the Hood, and the joy is good, however you have much hope, I fear that this shall fall. But it is not too bad, execpt for the sadnes, for here, it is all arranged, the Prince and Twang breathe in the same breathe-rhythm that is friendshift. "Give-for and get-for," as your saying. And he wants to "pick ripe frutts of the mind" of Twang, so I drinking and eating with him much, and this after-noon even golving together. Bonzo is as glad, he sleep all the day. The golf is hard, in my *phrap*, after a hole I only do the potting, I'm O. K. in this. The Voltic is today well-formed, he say, and his balls are straight. Then he shows something for the one who play wicked, and become furios with theirselves: near the very hard holes one see that I think are old-manner from-rain shelters, no, there are in them a lady with some whips, she's dress in sharp heals on botts under lather dress. So the man-player has hit balls in berries, he smile at the play-enemy, very gentle manly, and he come here and is bitup, then back to game all relax. The Prince know these nice ones, I'm meeting three, and pretty, Tisiphone, it is the most pretty, and Alecto, and Megaera. Others have also most harmonious ancient names. But then, I ask, where does the tense play-ladies go? For this the prince has a frown, it's the cold moment of our new intamity.

Bonzo after tells me, the girls are very fine prostature—that is his word, no “whore”, I supponing it is a pretty-er as we say *battazhum*? I have forgot your lessons, now for you a Pan new dictum—*Battazhum ticbaï, nob-me lemö üin*, with to-mean “Cofronting with a *battazhum*, love be-come an idea.” Some say *vin* not *üin*, “become a horpse,” it is unrighteous. The sense, is to justify the woress.

That also is well your vast diminution of fat. It is, like of a giungle of salad trees which near one village or group of cabitations is invade by creeperers and in this comes a man whowho desire that the trees wax and blossom, for he bear them good-willing and friendlike sentiment. He huts and off-bear all the torted branches or the evil-doing creepers to the end that the wood he clean and tended even with-in. He foster at that time the wood growing straihgt that is well come, in the manner that later the tree incresce and svelop. In that way you detach yourself from that is evil and fat and are clinginging to the just estates of mind, thus you push up in you and strong-then in you the Doctrine, and the Diet.

It has been nice, to re-see the Etuscan landscape. The life in Rostolena’s alway grand, and *wey!* it must be asked, some dollars, I therefore need a new war-robe. This is a small *slop* but I cannot else. It is for the coldness too. Fogs have start.

LVII

Dec. 1

I write from the lower depths of hangover: a hangover procured at my own expense from four sidecars, a bottle of New York State champagne, and six snifters of Drambuie—hardly enough to justify the wreck of this day. Indulgence has only deepened the trough of my depression; more about that later. Since I can think of nothing else, first let me explain the hangover.

Yesterday I was asked to tour the library with an out-of-state colleague. For once the chore was fun, thanks to the personality of the visitor, Mr. Alfred Korn of Phoenix. After an

afternoon in the tape stacks, we went out for drinks, and he came home for potluck. Unfortunately, between the third and last sidecars, we had broached the marshy topic of “simultaneity versus linearity.” Quoting third-hand examples from modern art and physics, we praised the former as a principle of thought and action, while condemning linear logic as archaic, inefficient, and dull. Our ideas were vague, but enthusiastic; and in our alcoholic simplicity we decided to put them into practice with an experiment in synchronous cooking.

On the way home we agreed on a two-course menu. Alfred would make spaghetti with fish sauce, I a giant vanilla flan. On arrival I had a first, fleeting qualm when Alfred complained about the absence in my larder of fresh sucking-fish. But he resigned himself cheerfully to canned tuna and set himself to chopping onions, accompanying his task with a *sotto voce* “Hallelujah Chorus,” to which he fitted his own text, “Non-sequential awareness!”

I had meanwhile turned on the oven. A burgeoning appetite sustained my expectation of a satisfactory dinner, and I set to work with gusto. But after I had assembled my ingredients and utensils, and was separating the white and yolk of my first egg, Alfred startled me with a gasp of indignation. (The egg flopped into the bowl entire.)

“You mustn’t do that,” he said. “It’s against the basic principle. If you break things down into their components you submit to linear tyranny at its worst.”

“Alfred, you can’t make a flan if you leave in all the whites. You peeled your onions, didn’t you?”

He considered these facts.

“Oke. We shall allow Zachary to divide the egg. But it’s heresy.”

It was a few moments later when, declaring “Now a few nuts to complete the spectrum,” he spooned a jar of *marrons glacés* into his sauce that I realized how high he was. I was no less so: I was simply less inspired by our “idea” and more interested in eating. I had got my elementary flan into the oven without disastrous omissions or commissions. Since

Alfred plainly needed more time than I, I left the oven door slightly open. Alfred had finished his preparatives and had begun, normally enough, frying garlic in oil. But as he poked the sizzling cloves he started becoming restless, and this restlessness culminated at last in a wave of impatience that visibly overwhelmed him. Before I could intervene, uttering a petulant shout of "No, no—at-onceness!" he emptied the contents of the saucepan into the water set to boil for the spaghetti, and dumped after them all the remaining ingredients: tomatoes, carrots, onions, herbs, tuna, chestnuts, and the *pasta* itself. He turned to me with a chuckle. "It's the whole concept of time—not chronology, but the moment as critical nexus of reality."

That moment arrived all too soon. There was a preparatory growl from the pot, then an irrepressible gush of orangish foam rose up like a thunderhead at sunset—rose up, swelled, and collapsed on the stove in a languorous hiss, sputtering over the incandescent burner as it coursed down the front of the stove, and into the oven, with its cargo of muddled grease. I was helpless before that roar and surge. Alfred was shining with anger and surprise. The vision was brief: the fuses blew.

Since there was no top on the baking dish, our meal was lost. We consoled ourselves with the champagne and a basket of fruit. Alfred wanted to start cooking again, but I had had enough. We drank away our disagreement.

Several hours later, and fewer ago, my head and innards woke me and drove me outside. No hart ever panted after the water brooks as I did for Bufferin and air. Shuddering I watched Venus and Mercury dancing above the low new moon.

Nothing is more adventitious than a hangover, but this one seems the outward and visible sign of inward and invisible gunk. My nerves are shot. First, my rapport with Mr. Hood broke down again. The responsible agent is without possible doubt Dexter Hodge. Unfortunately, he has become Mr. Hood's right hand in the treasure enterprise, and I must have all my dealings with him. I dread that he may try to eliminate me from their plans.

On top of this your letter came. Perhaps I'm unduly sensi-

tive, but it left me with the feeling that you were becoming someone else. I can't believe you do this on purpose. But without wanting to you have filled me with doubt. You speak of your life with the Prince and Pindola, who is after all only a failed rapist, as though that was what mattered to you. You reproach me for indifference to your account of Salvestro and his mother. Why *should* I be interested? I am down with worry and find this research, no matter how ingenious, irrelevant—especially when you tantalize me with the continuation of the dispute over the treasure. How much have you learned from that? Are you sure Salvestro kept his official positions? Was his presence in governing bodies a reason why the election of 1443 was annulled? The Medici clique called it *lo squittino del fiore d'aliso*, because of the lily's stink.

And there is this request for money to buy clothes! It's so unlike you. Besides, I cannot possibly afford expenses of this kind. You know I do not begrudge you a real pleasure, but I dislike spending money on a fancy dress which will only be worn once. I don't want you to look strange, but I certainly can't spend very much for this. Now it seems to me that there are things, in the way of clothing, that you need more, for instance warm undergarments, since you say it is turning cold and damp, and someone like you from a hot climate must take very special care not to catch cold or worse. In my opinion there is nothing on any occasion prettier than a Pannamese *phrap*, and wearing one would allow you to dress warmly underneath without looking bulky.

This may sound petty, but it is not for any lack of affection or concern. Quite the contrary. You must understand that I feel particularly frustrated by my disappointments here and that I am dismayed at the same time by the distance between us. Perhaps it's my liverish imagination. I don't mistrust you but for heaven's sake let me know what you're doing. It isn't that I want to dominate you, I'm happy if I can influence you even a little. But I still have to know who you are, and now I feel as though in a moment of distraction I had turned away from you, and when I turned back, you were gone.

LVIII

Decemb. 5

It is that only some silk I want, for to make *phraps* perhaps one two or three, that is it all. I've not wish to expend that money to a dressmaker or yet to shops with the dresses off the pig. No it is nonjust, Zachary! Already I've buy the underware with old money. Yet now, there is nothing for silk, and I shall have needing more for life expenses and cannot ask, for some or new. It is not grave and Twang'll do-make however. *Sheenam sheenam* I bear it, I do not mean reproval. I say *duvaï* to the more money and I shall not miss that. My mind to be *then, then* "we" and it is all.

But then: the presence of *Salvestro* is "reason why the election of 1443 was a null." *Pok atram pok naï!* I do think thus *not!* It was nothing to do. *Salvestro's* there yet in '45. Also he have support *Cosimo*, of course, in the politics, if the Medici are outthrow perhaps he loses the treasure ever. *Cosimo* had not a worry lest the *Salvestro* compete in a bank, for *Salvestro* had not the bank formation, his father wrote of that in regret; and so the father may be for it have enter him in the election because this is for "uffici intrincesi ed estrincesi" and they, are offices with payments. Last, it was *Cosimo & Co.* whowho wide the lists for seduti e veduti (wish, to make stablised families stronger there), if he's a worry of *Salvestro* he will not make his walk up to a public office so facile. And *Salvestro* is grateful and always vote-for Medici.

These mistakes, of dress and of the Florence politic, I think it's you're mind is overthrow with mudnanities. It's that it is like a jungle of Salas trees near a good town or some dwellings that is overtaken with savage vines, full of twisty boughs, and other discouragement. Please, you are to practice a small mastery of the breasth, simple and cuts the heavy weed. So, thinking of just that real air in-coming and out-going, say: Thinking of cessation of confusion I breathe-in, thinking of the cessation of confucion I breathe out," so a few thousand time, with relax. Then, all-calm, perhaps: *pok lucrem pok lucrem pok lucrem* I eat not I don't eat I will not cat, and so fourth (not).

You see so, I'm again at Florence. This is to recerch about

a little statue of gold, this the Prince have given Twang to sale. It's of late 15 century. Thus, once more into that Laurenziana. Also because it is coming back from the S. U., I must have to stay about two hundred hours in the Hustoms House, almost I go to insanity, it is so big and in it, no person knows more than one part of one law.

Yet I use my visits into the Library, that I look more for us. And thus, I'm very busy. So much preoccupation, do not admit me to think about myself. It is some felicitude.

I am depart from Rostolena in just time, on that day I see the snow prows have come out near the road way side, they wait for the first falling. Is that true, there are *pristwi* of the snow (daemons)? It here is cold too. I thank your expression of a fear, that I don't care myself about hatching a cold, and the like. Yet I am enough careful when I am a-wake, it is at the night the clothes are kick upon the floor and I'm espoused to the damp until coolness awake me, and the cold billowcase.

PART FIVE

LIX

December 9

This is the black time of year, even here in the sunniness—blackier here. Dry canes croon in the wind: my heart slept—wake up, heart! Sleep buried thought and feeling in stupidities, and “I” spoke them to you. Twang, your husband is sometimes insane. My last letter! Black blood scolloped from the soul’s cellars. How can it have happened? Solitude? Gazing on past miseries with the fondness of self-hate? If only at such times I could board a train, and in a few hours find you, to get back on the way to happiness (the way next to which I am my own ditch), the way that you opened to me, sweet lyon of the morning, piloting the tramp out of his compost years, with his joker’s baton and rig, dumb as blended Ajax—the ultimate T. B.

Contrition holds sway in the essential realm; elsewhere, mild thanksgiving. At lunchtime yesterday I stopped at the treasure office for a routine visit. The receptionist surprised me with the news that Mr. Hood was expecting me. I went in fearing the worst. The little gentleman received me courteously. “Waited to be sure you got this,” he said, sliding printed sheets across his desk with a pearl-pale finger. A glance

showed them to be a financial report, with the heading "Key Biscayne Dredging Operation." I said that there must be a mistake. "I don't think so. Cop a peek at the last paragraph." This announced a distribution of dividends, concluding: "We inform you of your share," with my name written in against the figure \$2,170.

Confused, yet not wishing to appear inept, I found nothing to say. Mr. Hood broke through my discomfort: "Dex did tell you that you'd been cut into the pie?"

"Dex" hadn't. Nor had he lacked the opportunity: I had seen him at Rilkie's over breakfast. The meeting had already lowered my opinion of him. He had remarked that he was "just hopscotching"—in other words, making book for the counter clientele. It was hard to believe: Dexter Hodge, tycoon, prominent citizen, Spindle Knight, doing the work of a petty criminal! Perhaps he thinks of it as slumming. He said nothing to me about my dividend, although he spoke to me for several minutes, glowing rosily in the morning light, rambling on about this and that, the luminous windbag! Should I warn Mr. Hood about him?

In the office, wariness compelled me to point out that I had never heard of the Key Biscayne operation. "That's all right. You're part of the outfit. You're entitled to your share. You can't imagine what a difference it makes having a bright man around. And you're a lot sharper in business than you let on. Don't think I don't know it!" I thought I must be dreaming, but the two grand prove I wasn't. *La vie* she is a little crazy. It's nice to be taken for a slick pro once in a while.

I'm sending extra money for your expenses, comfort, and all the *phrap* material you may desire. I'm glad you're dressing warmly. Be careful next week, during the "Wotan freeze." It's a short, bitter pre-Christmas cold snap, when Wotan, or Odin, supposedly abandons the north to fetch back the sun.

Trying your recommended exercises has been only partially successful. I concentrate satisfactorily during the breathing out part, so much so that I often forget to breathe back in. This leads to dizziness, once I even fainted, though very briefly.

LX

december 13

From here and from there I glue-up a tale of *Salvestro*, from '43 to '65, how he quarrels with *Cosimo* and then, with *Piero de' Medici*. It is un-yet-finished. It will be not-ever: for, the libri segreti after 1451 are been lost, after this the peekings are slimmer. In the general, the song of *Salvestro* is the old same, in his letters, in his spoke pleas to the cousins (I think too, if I'm right how I read the *Cosimo's* reports): that the treasure "dei 3 sciarrani" was truly-bluely of-*Averardo*, *nai*, so, of his afterbears. Yet the manner of *Salvestro* change from the earlier pleasant slow by slow, return violenter, more scourteous. But not the answers. *Cosimo* write ever gentler after *Salvestro* be the last *Averardo* leaf. That I do not understand. *Cosimo* had not such much need for the *Salvestro* vote. And still he will never write the forgivable words of resentment, that acridmony of *Salvestro* has replies of consideringness and offers of hompromies.

That little statue is sold, but not by Twang, by some other working in the Prince's organism. It is hard news, for there was long work, and some hopes.

Then, second trouble, that my noce is stuff. Never before. Twang apply some resulation disciplines, say, "Now thus face with the demon in nose," *Nai ticbaï pristwe mai neng-dek—duvai duvai* farewell, yet he don't want to leave! He walk in my mouth when I asleep and wipe off the smooth damp.

LXI

December 17

More news from the office. Mr. Hood called me in to inform me that he and several "colleagues and competitors" were organizing an expedition for early April. Its object will be the treasure at Key Betabara. The expedition will be financed by individual members of the different groups, with profits to be divided accordingly. Mr. Hood was giving me a chance to join. He said the price of admission will be steep.

He also made the venture sound *very* important. I did not

ask too many questions, because he was in a foul humor. His accountant had tried to play him for a savage by salting the books. With me Mr. Hood was gentleness itself, but a platinum light in his eyes betrayed an inmost fury.

What shall I do? There are reasons against participating: the money, the time taken from the pursuit of our treasure—but what if *this* were our treasure? I worry about being left out of future projects. There seems to be no straight answer, and I burrow under the problem like a daffy gopher. It's surely not that complicated. Which way do you counsel? (The way that will bring you here quickest—rapture of that parousia!)

Sorry about the statuette. Your golfing friendship hasn't made the Prince exactly frank in his dealings with you. Console yourself with the thought that he isn't fit to unfasten your shoes. (Not that you need bother to show it.)

I guess your cold was inevitable. For sleeping, better than drops is to smear a little mentholated jelly under your nose. You should see a doctor.

Your progress with the treasure is admirable. We've narrowed the gap in our knowledge to the few years between 1465 and 1483. What a marvel you are, dear Twang—

Twang Twang bo bang
Banana fanna fo fang
Fee fie mo mang
—Twang!

How happy I'd be lolling with you in a banana orchard, how I'd love you when I saw that you were looking at me, and that you loved me.

LXII

December 21th

It traspires, *Cosimo* in 1467 wants to export the horde of clippings. He try to does this in a trade company, where's a partner with *Francesco di Nerone Neroni*. They conseal the gold in any silk, but *Cosimo* doesn't

tell *Francesco* this and then he learns about the surrebterfuge from *Salvestro*, who has found in about this and attached it and ruin it. Yet not before that *Francesco* tries to get more money from *Cosimo*. Here, 2 letters of *Francesco* about it, condensed.

1. *To Cosimo de' Medici*: You made mistake to draw from our contract so fast, without listening my view. If it is fact that I arrange the trasport of the chest of the silk to the foreign, you were not so onest to hide the true content. Yes, I understand that you almost must be secret, but you shall have give me an alert to the dangers, that I shall have may been expose. For this spezial treatment of it shall have be necessary of course a little more of expense, to caretake of such a wonderful spedition. Do you do this, no, you unsolve the partnership, I guess you will punish me thinking, I'm not loyal, but who is punish? You too, because the company has have a lot success and why will it not still.

2. *To Salvestro Sguardofisso*: (about at same time): Look, whewhere my fidelity to you has bringing me—*Cosimo* has disciolved our company. Now, I say, I'll get my revench, you will get your property. Yet in the meant-time your indiscretions afflict me, they do the get-back more hard. First, I don't know, that you be right in that congetture. O. K., *Cosimo* has write as he has confess, "ho facto torcere il oro in un pezzo di seta di 500 bracci," I agree as good you are much suptle to think it mean, the little piecings of gold are "throw" in the silk, but he did maybe not signify it. I do not denegate, that man is diabolical enough to do so a thing. Yet, your are not-wise, to verify it, so you say as you do, with the question to this one here and that one there, and there. All weaver in Tuscany be now has, heard of the treasure. Where you demand of the marks upon it, I reply: *Cosimo* said only then quhen he first instrugt to ship the chest offff, that it (chest) and as well the silk within that have "i segni familiari". Now be careful of going in Bologna, the plague has intered the city, &c.

The nose isn't weller, yet this shall be not *tharai* alway always, *ticbai Twang neng sheenö* in the face of nose I shall bear.

Yes, yes, you are to go in the venture with the Hood. He want you to do that, he'll distain you shall you not, and all so months to be with Hodge & Hood, and you will lett the of-fortunity go past? To this you are to bag, burrow, or steel the money. How, are you making so much complihations? It is complete useless. And yet I know, such matters are not less or

more real in this materio-subtle world, for: *Nob-ma, stheu ticbaï nam pok-ma*—O Being, all in front of it is not-being, a love-most sayso of the Pans. But, whewhere you are writing, “There seem to be no strait answer,” *POK atram POK naï*, I do *not* think thus, or this way, or this.

It’s becoming very frank in concern with the figurine, and I pull-off myself my shoes. The Prince send me yesterday the commission (12%) from the selling. With this come apology for the retard, and to do vivid the apologies a pottery of green plants dark green, that will not die in my chamber. I believe, this is the Bonzo have made that to happen, so I am full to him, of grateful, and affection.

For you in this paper Twang folds a twig of smelly rosemary.

LXIII

December 26

I have accepted Mr. Hood’s offer. You were wrong to accuse me of making complications. The decision would only have been easy if Mr. Hood were a simple person. I wish he were simple, even a simple tyrant. But it’s a subtle not a heavy hand that maintains his hold on his employees and friends—I almost said subjects.

He was pleased with my decision: I could now expect to make a considerable sum. “Otherwise, as some kind of executive, you’d have had to settle for a salary, or a measly two per.” How much could I put up? I asked what was the minimum amount? “That depends.” I would raise as much as I could. I suggested contributing “certain maps” as part of my stake. (I did this to provoke some indication of what Mr. Hood knows.

Mr. Hood seemed largely, although not entirely, uninterested. He concluded with a slightly brisk suggestion that I start raising my share without delay. Perhaps he took the offer of maps as an attempt to buy in cheaply, but I doubt this—he

is always praising my integrity.

What a gloomy time this is! To celebrate Christmas the palm tree outside my building dried up and died. An adolescent goon has already lopped off most of the fronds. I stare at the stripped trunk and wonder how to get a piece of that business, which Mr. Hood described as in the millions. My means are so pitiful. If only he had refused the maps outright, or named a sum. His ambiguities have left me in a desultory fever.

These worries have aggravated a case of holiday insomnia that will probably kill me. At four every morning I turn on the lights and stare at the objects in the room. There's your sprig of Tuscan rosemary among them: the Virgin's rose, so timely come, laden with fragrance and thoughts of weddings (funerals too). I wish you had spelled out a few words of affection to set next to it. Somehow your last note was not so treasurable as your former ones. But your light shines on.

And the discovery of what happened in 1457 is a triumph. Such patience and intelligence bring hope for everything—I even imagine the dead palm putting out new green. (It won't. Here, spring means only turning on the blower connected to our God-given radiator.) It is at last clear why the chest of gold is a chest of silk. This is as valuable as having the map: we now know what to look for. Of the work we had set ourselves, you have already done more than your share.

Of *course* the bits of clipped gold were wound into the silk when it was "thrown." Since only one or two workmen were involved, the secret could be easily kept. Later the threads were woven into cloth, weighty but otherwise unexceptionable. No wonder the Abbot suffered over those lengths of brocade!

That Cosimo describes the markings as "familiar" indicates that there were fish on the chest and crows on the silk. Both sets are so *familiari* they appear in every account; and the treasure even took its name from the fish. Were the crows a weaver's mark—can you check this? To the Abbot they were sure signs of the gold. What I cannot fathom is how the real chest reached the abbey in time to be sent to Barcelona. But doubtless you will solve that enigma too.

As for your persistent cold, I think—well, perhaps I should stop “thinking” and send you a hug.

LXIV

Wey Twang me ticbaï pristwe o god I’m face to a demon, new, it rise in me like boil water, it is making me very conflicted, for that the gentle Bonzo, whowho has be so kind to Twang, so affective I think, he is hookered by an other, a dark native, and that woman, do not smile and laugh much such as our ladies, O no but of clever tragical, it is not good, I hate that her dark of-chick-fatt soul, and she is nothing good for Pindola, more, and more he has suffer from that one draem he dream, that he is a dagger! I will *uüaxm pop vin uomit* over on the corpse, of-her, when I shall can. Yet this is not the way, I must know, *slop pok duvāi pok*, a misery is not for ever evr. Still the water foam-hots.

Then I think too, of your words on these letters of *Franceso Nerone*, yes I think of you remarkings on *Cosimo*, how there is no difficulty to believe when he says that those marks are *familiari* that they can to be crows and fishes—*pok atram pok naï!!* Is it that you desire still, that I expedit to you the italian dictionary?

Exceptively there has been some business pleasure. The Prince gives me a hameo to sell. I was hearing of one american collector on the visit in Florence, I go to the cotel, it’s a snatch. The pleasure is, to gain money by Twang’s self. The Prince please too, sending me a new plant-pot. Before it, and those other, I have sit, to write these lines, and they semble to be waving, so I do now, acrossed the Atlantic.

LXV*

December 31

I must write without an answer because I'm becoming a psychosomatic derelict. I can't sleep. Fatigue keeps me awake—body in a spasm, head full of rivers thundering toward a nameless sea.

The trouble is carnival. For us Knights it has already begun. Most of us are busy decorating the streets for the parades (the first takes place in four days.)

Decorating is a poor word for what's being done. After pavements and sidewalks have been scrubbed, housefronts repainted, commercial signs removed, and ill-aligned buildings straightened, a continuous decor is installed, with paintings, statues, three-dimensional gardens, street-to-roof tapestries, arcades of flowers, canopied intersections...

The cost of this is shared by the city and a few wealthy citizens, who are given certain streets as their responsibility. Although they generally turn a profit from carnival through a multitude of concessions, these individuals must be able to put up hundreds of thousands of dollars. Many Knights meet this requirement. Others less rich are at least refurbishing their own properties. But I, in whom any such pretensions would be comic, have been given another privilege. I have been made watchman of a glorified parking lot. It is called the "carriage patch," it lies near the Bayfront Park Bandshell, and in it the processional carriages are abandoned between parades.

I must devote two hours before and after office work to my new job. It is not only a tedious but a useless one: the lot is enclosed in vibrant wire. I was forced to take it; Dexter Hodge did most of the forcing. This morning he drove me to the patch, as if I couldn't be trusted to get there alone. "Don't be fractious!" he kept saying, even when I had stopped complaining. He took pains to convince me that being watchman was a mark of great esteem. Miles Hood had held the office last

*Special delivery

year. "Right, Phan?" He turned to Phaniel Asher, another Knight he'd brought along. Mr. Asher agreed. After this double testimony Hodge went on lecturing me until we reached the patch, where he left me with a genial wink.

My two hours then, and most of my afternoon stint, passed in undistracted solitude. As watchman one may not read, write, or even sit. I sniffed the mortuary smells of the carriages; gazed hungrily at "The Dragon Spit," a Chinese restaurant across the road (as bar-b-cue it was simply "The Spit"); or listened to irksome strains from the bandshell, where the All-Miami Youth Brass Ensemble rehearsed *The King's Dump*.

At six, thoroughly bedaggled, I had a visit. A car skidded up to the gate, and out of it bounded Mr. Hood's three guards, their red neckties fluttering as they leaped towards me. Backed against a barouche, I withstood their harangue, loud but not unfriendly:

"Hi there!"

"Hi there!"

"Hi there!"

"Look at *you* ..."

"... in your cold gold prison!"

"All alone!"

"No twist, baby?"

"No twist, *sir*?"

"Don't be grumpy!"

"*We'll* find you ..."

"... a slattern to your Saturn ..."

"... a Venus to your ..."

"Don't mind us."

"We've been sniffing sulfur."

"Shouldn't we tell him?"

"No."

"No."

"He'll never blow."

"He's no crow..."

"...but he won't blow."

"He's not snider..."

"And you can't knock him."

"Bobble him a little?"

"Let him wait for the moon."

"But hopefully."

"It's hopefully you must wait for the moon."

"Bye now."

"...bye now..."

"Bye."

They hopped into their Dodge and drove off. Were they drugged (from "sniffing sulfur")? Character-judgments aside, their nostrils did foam slightly.

I had brazened out their litany, but my inner structures were shattered. I stared at the orange elephant floating over the gate, symbolizing the people of Miami, and felt myself going crazy. I'm not much better now, waking from a doze, everything wrapped in deep silence and the night half spent. Your words... to preserve me from terrible forces, all these men—

I'm helpless without a sign from you. I feel as if I were being swathed in endless black fabrics and stowed away.

Everything is in confusion, the Knights, me, us. Can't you make a short trip here and bring some light?

I incessantly repeat your name against the Lesser Sanhedrin that confronts me. Your name is my non-ancestral totem.

I write because I can't bear waiting for your letter and to ask, can you make that trip?

LXVI*

Janu. 3

It has been time now, that I wish to speak secrets to you and thus, as soon as your specially delivered letter has awakened me from delicious slumber, I think it shall be now. For I know, since the middle november, the letters to you are be open. So I control in the letter of 21 dec. There was in it, no rosamary! But the opener think, it falls out, and he put in one. Your

*Because of insufficient postage ("Unauthorized Enclosure") this letter was returned to the sender, c/o General Delivery, Florence.

thank you ensure my knowledge. However, here is a twig truly from la Twang.

For I am in some minutes to snuggle this away, past any spy, to a post office and speed this with my proper hand. Yet it will be right, with after letters, to do old way, then they will not suspect. To mail secretly, is terrific it must be rare—not again.

Now I quick shall say of markings on chest. Read this sentence, that I cannot send because of those opening, from *Averardo* to *Giov. di Bicci*, 1403: he is speak of *Messer Todao's* gold: say, “e quei 25 sacchi furono portati dalla vostra gente, nella vostra casa.” I inscript it but in the mind, it is maybe non-exact, no bother. For you must perceive, how signifying this is? And not for only what the marks then are being, but it is a flash on the late “travels” of that treasure.

The cretin Pindola knows nothing of it, nor the Voltic. Bonzo ignore even, the life of *Salvestro*. His family custody the things of “ulterior descendents *Averardo's*” he don't know there be one! You shall say, So, what? I say, Nice to be 1 up over them!

Also, I have Pindola in soul mess. Twang entirely brain-flush him. That other, dark woman? Twang rent her, from one-horse bordello. Thus: Pindola wishes, to penetrate in Twang. “No. But let me introduce, Signorina Dark. Can penetrate in her, please.” He does does. O after, crazy with the more wanting for Twang. Two day before, he visit; I “forget” his mars bars, he enter psycho-psexual glycemia frenzy, he spends memorable New Year day mostly shouts and yells things like, “Where all the vulvas (*ficche*)?” even I was worry concerning the neighbor effect. I have write to you my jealousy sentiment, to hover my truth. This is truth, a chinese say: “In the men a desire is mother to love, In the woman love is the father to desire.” And how grand his desire for Twang (yet not so much, as her love, for thee.)

Ah poor one that you suffur, only now it shall be, *wuc nāi stheu slop lucre theu*, as this all inhappiness eat up us, yet it is but now, and after, you shall chuse for yourself an house; which Twang will like, because you like it. Now, or soon, I am

coming to Miami, however it must not be seen, you must not say it, seem to know none. But use some way the two words, they will tell Twang, you wish her to come, she will come. The words, I choose: "dictionary" "Pogo O'Brine"

After, I answer crazy anythings, you will ignore. Then tomorrow I am to write a "real" (false!) answer to your letter, it is for Bonzo and the Prince and their spies, not for Zachary.

I must need, about dollars 50 plus to pay the quick plane billet.

And always now I must fill the letters with lyings of many color, be as twisty as that *bukhai* tree. Yet it's no matter, not the lies, not any things, are I. Remember, what is "me"? One is to inspect, so reflect: The eye, the observed form, are not "me". The hear and sound, are no "me". The tongue and the tasted are not, the "me". The knows and the stink aren't "me". The body and touch are not "the me". To consider that those 6 personalized senses and their objects do not make a "me", this is the perception of impersonality, O relief and purify, to Twang, to you I trust, although like all even that is a cool dewdrop lasted no more than trace of stick in water. Yet does this afflict, if then one am satisfied in meditation and distachment.

(You must lie also, for they shall have open your letters, as much.)

It cannot be said, more. Such little is this "airletter" paper stamp blue-light all in one. And never, the enough place, for speech of my loving.

LXVII

jan. 4

To behold your trouble is as, to behold water troubling and muddled. That not-desire to know and think, with doubt, hesitating, small commitment, and mindwander, it is call "skeptical doubts". That is an obstacle to advance, you shall liberate the self from them. For a sample, can be said such, naming now the doubts "the Demon"—

<i>ticbaï pristwi</i>	<i>nob me</i>	Face to the deman,	for to-be,
<i>pristwi</i>	<i>pok me</i>	"the demon	not be
<i>pristwi me</i>	<i>pok-ma</i>	the demon is:	not-be"

or like that, to show what are two paths

<i>pristwi lucre nob-ma</i>	demon eating the not-being
<i>pok-ma lucre pristwi</i>	non-being eats demon

There may come clearing in some water; or think:

it seem, the conditions of life are a terror. Thus, they're disgusting. Then, throw them away, and comes through inspection the imperturdability, the reflection on the unconditional, dismissing the conditions.

Well, for that trip, you do it better and you will voyage to Firenze, just as I say in my lastest letter. Perhaps I shall lean you the money for trip? (Exattly so I have said in my late letter.) From these objects sold of the Prince, the hommissions are adding together.

O what to do with that Bonzo, once so dear? I tell him, he must let go that brown woman, it is bad to him, sad on Twang. He says, O left her any days past, but the men's speech are incredible. Just as he in english then say, he will "eat on locusts and wild money," *per fare penitenza!* (And that does, what mean to mean?)

LXVIII

Is it you or I who is losing their marbles? I needed help, not a sermon. I try to be Greek with the Greeks and Pan with the Pannamese, but your advice is very obscure. So is everything else you wrote, and especially the references to your last letter. Do you really want me to make the trip? If you do, say so unambiguously, that's the main thing. (Why in the world do you offer to pay for it?) Wouldn't it be easier for you to take time off from whatever you're doing? Or are certain problems too pressing—what indeed am I supposed to think of

this incredible jealousy of yours? "Dear Bonzo!" Jesus! Finally, I never asked for an Italian dictionary.

These misunderstandings make me the more eager for us to get together. I hope you are fit as a fiddle, and ready for love again. I am hunky-dory which means only normally depressed. I am so tired that I can no longer feel strong emotions of any sort. I swallow neat rye like spring water, and hamburgers like pills.

Standing around the carriage patch is still what is most exhausting, because it's so frustrating. Of course it prevented me from watching the opening parade. It's the first time I've missed it since the war.

Carnival began, as it always does, with the entrance into town of our Mystery Guest. Somewhere in Opa-Locka, temporary but grandiose gates have been built. Outside them the Guest's escort first assembled: heralds and ambassadors from all fifty-one states and several neighboring countries, with bands and retinues. There were even interplanetary representatives: this year our kohl-eyed clowns play the role of "Venusians." All were ceremoniously refused entrance until the Guest's arrival and made to don orange cloaks and caps, thus becoming honorary Miamians. The local citizenry already wore orange.

Invited to "preside over Miami's destiny as romance metropolis," the Guest appeared before the gates. He was greeted by the black and white Mayors of the city, and by the Black Virgin of Dade County, who is chosen by lot from the poor of her community. They ask the Guest who he is. "Are you Hermes Trismegistus? Are you the American Hercules?" He replies, "Call me the Pilot," promising only to reveal his name at the end of the festival. The welcomers crown him with orange leaves and give him the tokens of the city: a wand wrapped in crossed spirals of turtlehead, and a gold coin. Advancing to the gate, the Guest drops the coin in a slot above its lock, and with the wand strikes a bucranium adorning the lintel. Thereupon the massive plywood doors swing open. Before entering the city the Guest asks the Mayors to grant pardons and paroles. His flag precedes him. It shows a white

ship on a black ground, symbolizing "Miami under the Pilot's Guidance," and until Ash Wednesday it will replace our banner as city emblem. As the flag passes through the gates, a baby hare is released and scampers down the empty expressway: a reminder of the "fun" aspect of carnival. A moving grove of oranges trees followed the Guest, turning this way and that according to the rules of a time-honored dance. Then came the Black Virgin, the Mayors, the ambassadors (the Venusians rolling among the rest like hoops), and the cortege of floats.

Their destination was the city center, where the Guest was to initiate a new dance. He stopped on the way to pay homage to a new statue of the President; since the work hadn't been completed in time, he had to lay his wreath in front of just the horse. This lapse may cost us the Dixie Carnival Cup.

I saw nothing of this, except for the hare, who found his way to my backwater and stared at me for a few seconds (exit, pursued by a scamp.) Much later, a float appeared. It exhibited a pastoral scene. Under spangled netting (dawn sky of stars and sun), among pale grasses bordering a mirror (icy pond), a donkey nosed about the roots of a tree; a gray lantern was nailed to its trunk, an empty bird's nest perched in its boughs. Title: "The Phoenix."

The slovenly old man driving the float wanted to park it in the carriage patch, which was unthinkable. He pretended to be an old friend who had "done me plenty of favors in his time." He called me fink and Pogy O'Brien, and his raggie stuck out her tongue at me as they lurched off.

The expression "eating locusts and wild honey" is from the Bible—perhaps a barbaric Jewish custom. It means "roughing it."

LXIX

J. 11

It is shame, the honey not money. For in Pannam, some eat "wild money"—flowers of a bursh of the grots who are few,

so, precious, also delicious. The eaters are men wild too (but these, not clowns: hungry thieves.)

And this subject money: may you remember, that that Twang ultimately has requested.

What sadness that you will not learn that teaching for consolation. Is it simpler, these mottoes? *uūiaxē slop*, retch woes! *lemō māi*, love the now's *pok atrō* not speak (think)! *mō!* be! The aim of the arrows is, contemplating transmorphations dissipate the idea "stability". Thus (he said) brother, a monk with the mind full of impurturbability, pierces one way first, then in a second, a third, a ford; similarly over, below, around: and in everyplace being one with all he'll penetrate the world with his mind full with impeturbabality, the wide, grown, unlimited, hate-free and malevolence free Mind.

Also I wish, you once will say, you would like some thing, because I like it. This recalls, soon I perhaps have a thing, that it is we both like (and look!) much, much.

Now that trip, it is not a matter to Twang, that you enterprise it, that she. Or, not all. Yet I shall believe the first plan is that we follow. I shall think, Giannuary 19? Thus I'm glad when you mention a dictionary. It is also interesting, that Mr. O. Brien is come to the town.

LXX★

January 15

Your letter was a big help. O.K. for the wisdom of the east, but what about the trip? That little phrase "or not at all" left me feeling coshed. Or were you just drawing the long bow? It would be cruel to exercise your English when your husband's sanity is at stake. What do you mean, the first plan? Say what you expect and want! Why is this meeting such a problem? It's like organizing a party in Gander in the pre-jet days. Why reproach me for not sending the money you asked for, when I promptly furnished it? I hate this talk of money

★Special delivery

and wish you would stop it and not transform yourself from a woman of wit and beauty into a dun. Especially now, when I need every penny for Key Betabara.

I suppose that "I should like what you like" means Bonzo. My God, I thought you'd taken him for a chump, not a play-mate! What was the story you once told me, when I smiled at one of your pretty compatriots, about the rival pigeons that fight over a mate, and both die? The moral was: "Two dead pigeons will not warm the broads you sleep on."

How I have come to hate this time, how I long for our life to begin! I don't much care where, as long as it's not here. Not only because of the present. Miami has an original, other taint. When I was twelve, my parents brought us up here for Easter, and they lost me when they started home. Since we had been traveling with another family, they assumed I was with them. I had in fact gone to see *Random Harvest*. Afterwards I was alone in the city for three eternal hours. I was then punished for hiding myself deliberately, which I had not done. Miami became a place of doom. But anywhere else. I won't be difficult, I only ask to be with you, and with Mr. Dharmabody if he lasts—he's getting awfully gray about the paws. Not much outside activity, perhaps a movie from time to time, but mostly at home, a life of patience and compassion. I promise not to start a shell collection or design a coat of arms. Roses perhaps. I would be content to sit with you and watch the rain fall in the pool.

The fiesta continues on its boisterous way. The Guest has engaged in the first contests to prove his supremacy: golf with the Black mayor, jacks with Ayer Favell. The games will grow in violence. Once all were violent, since the festival originated in Ghetto Riot Week and it was necessary to rechannel its ferocity.

I have felt less out of things lately. One of the dance floats has been moored opposite the carriage patch. These floats, now scattered through the city, are manned by professional dancers who demonstrate the new carnival step, the Muffle. The dancers wear costumes illustrating the Muffle's theme, "The Melancholy of Anatomy": body tights dazzlingly em-

broidered with diagrams of the skeleton, the circulatory system, the musculature.

The Venusians have already introduced a parody of the Muffle that is supposed to be as popular as the original. At the second largest float, near Interama, only the parody is danced.

LXXI

17th Jan.

It will be best to say, there is no trip. This will make expressions of regret, by you, by me, which will be accompanied by thought of aversion, to blow up the conception of the Lust. Yet can you, my beloved, so calm your soul, to think quiet? You make it, by the *lai* in the mind, that mud, almost not able to be satisfied of detachment. I shall reminder, and do you, that the life in time is a wheel, and one point sole of the rim touching the earth, a creature is alive but at the point, the rim's points gone by are death, the points coming are not alive, when they come the now will be dead. It shall be new creatures.

Thank you also for your espresso letter that raised me nicely early, so I could enjoy the day to the full. And I think, when you tell that life together, there lack perhaps some sufficient excitements.

Or it is so, when the rain fall on the mountains tops, in abundance, the water follows the sloping fills the splits, these latter fills the marshs, they the lakes, overflowing who make small rivers, the rivers feed grand rivers, they, fill up an ocean. By parallels, are created the activities by ignorance, consiousness by activities, name and form by consciousness, the 6 actions by name & form, contact by six actions, feeling by contact, desire by feeling, becoming by desire, birth by becoming, suffering by birth, repulsion by knowledge and comprehension of things, and the knowledge of extinction of ignorance. And so, on. You, a vespral lake streaky with wild colors, wild longings for holding of the sun that setting.

Therefore and again as first expressed, Jan. 19 will have the sun rise.

(That second, librarian object of our desire has a sure record here. I think it's mine—but, "ours", it shall be always *then* we not Twang.)

In Pannam it's said, *Pok Lao nam sheenam* not even the Lao (tions) can bear (in) it, when a joy of hope is strong strong, so that breath be past mastery. It is improbable that this Twang not be dead, bended to the near point of coming, on that wheel. And that it turn there, to new "now", but stop!

LXXII*

...person-to-person.

"Would you spell that, sir?"

Em see capital see ay el tee ee eks.

"And your name, sir?"

Mr. McCaltex.

"I'll call you back in a moment, sir."

What's that?

"I'll call you back, sir."

Oh. This noise... damn car race....

"Your call to Florence, sir... Miami calling Florence, two six nine three seven seven, to speak to a Mrs. McCaltax, m as in mother, c as in Charlie, c as in Charlie, a as in able, l as in love, t as in Tommy, a as in able—"

E. As in eel.

"... e as in easy, x as in X-ray."

—What the last letter please? Ics?

"X-ray."

—O.K. One instant..... It ring now. *Albergo Camerlenghi? Si domanda dagli Stati Uniti la Signora Maccalteches, Milano Como Como Ancona Livorno Torino Empoli ics—come xenofobia.*

—*Non ci stà quella signora.*

*Long-distance telephone call, Miami-Florence, January 18

Operator, wait a minute, operator—

“Yes, sir?”

Try her maiden name, Panattapam, I guess I’d better spell it.
P as in pilfer, a as in angle, n as in... nuts?

“Nan?”

Yes, Nan, then angle, terrible, terrible, angle, pilfer, angle,
... man.

“Nan?”

No, *man*—m, as in mud.

“The first name, sir?”

Well, actually it’s double—Tro-tsi, t-r-o... like Trotsky
without the k ...

“Groffsky?”

No, Trostky, Trotsky I mean. Never mind. Just say Twang.
Tang. Wing. Angry. *Neng*—no, Nan. Gong.

“Florence, please ask ...”

—I hear last name, but first?

“Tommy, whisky, oboe ...”

Not oboe—

“Yes, sir?”

Nothing...

“Tommy, whisky, oboe, Nan, George.”

—*Si domanda un'altra persona, la Signora Tvong Panattapam,
Torino, William-Holden, Otranto, Napoli, Genova, poi Palermo
Ancona...*

—*Ma questa signora non ci stà. E fuori.*

Operator, let me speak to her.

“Do you wish to make the call station-to-station, sir?”

Yes, I do.

“Rome, the caller will speak with the answering party.
Go ahead, sir.”

Albergo Camerlenghi?

—*Sì, signore.*

Dove la Signora McCaltex?

—*Non saprei, signore.*

Uscire?

—*Credo che sia partita.*

Come? Come?

—*Credo che la signorina sia partita.*

Dove?

—*Forse in campagna.*

Oh. *Lasciare messaggio?* “Arrive tomorrow,” *scrivere: a come addio...*

—I understand perfect: “Arrive tomorrow.”

LXXIII

Jan. 21

My trip to Florence was the eighth gothic tale. It has left me a shambles. My body doesn't know what time it is. My mind hankers for the night zones.

Now, safely home, I can admit a fact I spared you: I am hopelessly frightened of air travel. It's foolish, but what does that change? Before departure I consumed half a bottle of pills, but they did not blunt my flight-long terror. Only when I landed in Fiumicino, wondering where you were, then remembering that you couldn't know my flight, did wooziness come. I hardly dared drive. But I crawled to Florence in the little rented monster, its steering wheel digging into my paunch, and found the albergo; where to my stupefaction I learned that you were still away. I pestered that poor lady about you, but she couldn't help, although she did make one call. (To whom?) For the rest of the day I walked through the dank city, yearning to find you, expecting you around every corner, eating meals of various sizes, sipping numberless coffees and drinks, not daring to telephone your friends for fear of compromising you, in fear of them, sinking through sluggish currents of exhaustion and disappointment like a pebble in a tank of crude oil. Night came, no news of you, I was taken to your room—your room!—touched your clothes, sniffed your scents, laid between your sheets. It was awful to sleep without you but fatigue and Valium won. I never heard the alarm: I was awakened by a stuck horn. There was no sign of you. I didn't dare stay away longer. So after leaving the note and money—don't take me for a Pogy O'Brien (how

did you learn that expression?), it was almost all I had—I drove back to Rome for my return trip. Before boarding I absorbed so much *stravecchio* that I felt someone else was taking the plane.

What a flight! With the money I had left, I had hoped to prolong my non-existence with a few splits of champagne. A wedding party had reserved the entirely supply, so it was back to bourbon, which sobered me immediately. I was sitting next to three bronzy orientals, one mother, one father, and one pretty girl. They may have been sweet souls, but I was never to find out, for at the moment of take-off they buried their heads in shawls and scarves, a dismaying sight. Soon they started vomiting, missing my Flagg Bros. boots by fractions, and they did not desist. I tried to “be something” about this and concentrate on reading the *Sunday Times*, but my general love of the human brotherhood wasn’t up to the occasion. I changed seats.

Festive Miami seemed no haven to the returning traveler. From the air, Funland Amusement Park was visibly swarming. A doze on the bus ride into town left me stunned with accumulated weariness. Outside the terminal, waiting for a cab, I began chatting with a personable young man. It was at least a minute before I realized that he was a carnival mannequin. I couldn’t believe it until I touched him. Indeed touching him was irresistible: he was more real than the living.

Reaching my apartment I at last found out where you had been. It ended one painful uncertainty. Christ what a mess. Why didn’t you wait? My anxiety now fills sky and earth and day and night. Even before leaving I had been completely distraught. You may have noticed in my room a coffin-like carton and a suitcase which despite its appearance was not made of human flesh. They had been confided to me by an elderly neighbor, Mrs. Roak, to be deposited at the Rome airport—she is soon flying to Italy to visit an idiot cousin and was afraid of being overweight. Mrs. Roak stopped by half an hour before my departure, yet I forgot my promise. I was that bewildered from worry (from the pills too, perhaps.) How do you think I feel now? I have no energy, no confi-

dence. I feel that I've been tried as silver is tried, and found to be tin. How can I stand firm in trouble when I can't even stand up! Outside of you there has been nothing to give me hope. My work at the library is disreputable and I am frequently told as much. I haven't found a trace of the map. I wrote to Avignon and Harvard for help; no replies. Mr. Hood might just as well live in Peshawar for all the attention he pays me. And yet these things would matter little if I had seen you—if I had not lost touch with you. It's unpleasant to blame you, but who else is there to blame for the wasted days and nights, the money spent, and the terrible expense of passionate affection? I begged you to explain your desires and you refused. What a miserable time for us, or for me. Perhaps someday I shall see why it was necessary to drink this vinegar first.

LXXIV

January 24

Yes, it was the cause of regret, and of so much amazing. Yet I have told the plan, it is more than I seize. My two days in country also bring less than the comfort desired. But that sad fear in the airplanes, it has not conflicted me. The plane move at an enormous speed, that is true, but there is less fearing when was in them than when explained it from far away. I am frighten for you therefore. For my very small trip, it was in the train, I borrowed money, so I am thankful for your thought, to leave any, my very dear.

However with the tumult of your arriving, my most dear friends the Count and Bonzo learn my absence. When I am returning, in evening, they called upon me. From your cause my reputation has suffered unjustly. So why did you not tell me, you shall come? These friends will have believe there is secrets from them. They cannot think I shall be gone to country, however I show my cut ticket, that in some way I have thought to keep it. Then is it friendly, and they will stay to converse. But Twang is weary, so into a great cyclone of

yawnings that in five minutes I think I blown them out from the room and was asleeping at eight p.M.

Can it be consolation, that one other thing we search, here, there, is here? And of course it will be in *Mediceo Avanti il Principato!*

This town is as you saw her, gray with coldness. One expect the river will freezes. The moving images are dull. I read some first mistery stories, and play fooling games of card, that I enjoy, with the little girls of the hotel lady, she you met, who is ever more helpful (is this the good word?) about mail.

Than I think, you are in need of being more accurate when you are writing to me.

I have remembered, the contemplating of the estate that is being without desire shall dissipate the idea of pleasure, and I repeat this, Contemplation of a state without desire dissipate the idea of pleasure. Zachary it is hard. It is too strong to master, the buddist way, sometime. I tell you: *Wey, Twang dek lăi, Twang nam me vin*. But: *theu mau neng* and *theu nob-me neng*.

Bruce Andrews

Bananas are an example.

Ted Berrigan

Three Sonnets for Tom Clark

(An appreciation for his kindness in Features)

I.

In The Early Morning Rain
To my family & friends "Hello"
And money. With something inside us we float up
On this electric chair each breath nearer the last
Now is spinning
Seven thousand feet over / The American Midwest
Gus walks up under the arb-light as far as the first person
The part that goes over the fence last
And down in a green forest ravine near to "her"
Winds in the stratosphere
 Apologize to the malcontents
Downstairs. The black bag & the wise man may be found
 in the brain-room.
what sky out there Take it away
 & it's off
one foot
 is expressing itself as continuum
the other, sock

2.

Tomorrow. I need to kill
Blank mind part Confusions of the cloth
White snow whirls everywhere. Across the fields
in the sky the
Soft, loose
stars swarm. Nature makes my teeth "to hurt"
shivering now on 32nd street in my face & in my head
does Bobby Dylan ever come around here? listen
it's alive where exposed nerve jangles
& I looming over Jap's American flag
In Public, In Private The Sky Pilot In No-Man's-Land
The World Number 14 is tipsy as pinballs on the ocean
We are bored through.....through.....through with our
professionalism
Outside her
Windows

I'm amazed to be here
A man who can do the average thing
when everybody else
is going crazy Lord I wonder just exactly what can happen
my heart is filled (filling) with light
& there's a breeze sort of & I'm going
way over
the white skyline do what I want to
Fuck it.

Tied up wit
Tie with red roses The war of the Roses, &
War is Shit. White man, tomorrow you die!
Tomorrow means *Now*. “You kidding me?” now.
Light up. you will be great
It’s a complication. Thanksgiving, 1970, Fall.

Coda: Three Sonnets for Tom Clark

Being a new day my heart
is confirmed in its pure Buddhahood
activity under the clear blue sky
The front is hiding the rear (not)
which means we have (not) “protected ourselves”
by forgetting all we were dealt
I love all the nuts I’ve been in bed (with)
hope to go everywhere in good time
like, Africa: it would be tremendous (or not)
I drink up the rivers. Be seeing you
to ride the river (with) heads riding gently
its personal place feet doing their stuff up in the air
where someone (J.) dies, so that we can be rude to friends
While you find me right here coming through again.

Poems (1970)

The subway when
no one's there, and then
the train is screaming.
People are screaming.

★

2 nobodies laughing—
bursting—
filling the car.
They became great.

★

A girl in a fur hat
with bulging eyes
rubs against me.
I'm not attracted.

★

I saw a marine,
a U.S. Marine,
in uniform.
That seems unusual.

★

Fat woman in a red dress,
fat woman in a green coat,
in an argument
about lipstick.

★

In the old building
a girl is singing—
when I stop to listen,
she stopped & listened.

★

SONYA'S BEAUTY SALON

What's going on?
Who ever goes there?
No one's ever been there.

★

Poor lady
with a baby
but the baby
doesn't know.

★

An ordinary man is humming
while he works.
He shines my boots and sings—
he shines & hums.

★

NIGGER SUCKS WHITE PRICKS
it says on the subway wall—
I've never heard of such a thing,
but it's funny to think about.

★

People going up & down,
forward, toward
my eye, by me,
through the town.

Anne Waldman

Curt Flood

a box a camera with a one-track mind

behind it

can't see too good

Running Man

all opening up in the dream of throaty Janis swaggering
I had last night

she's a cowboy

a fixed star

shining & singing

far inside the windy city

far inside the windy country too

you're swift & your name really turns me on,
Mr. Flood

Curt Flood Curt Flood Curt Flood Curt Flood

we're watching

& drinking beer & fretting & rooting for you!

arms & legs go so fast
I wonder why we're built
this way

big & religious

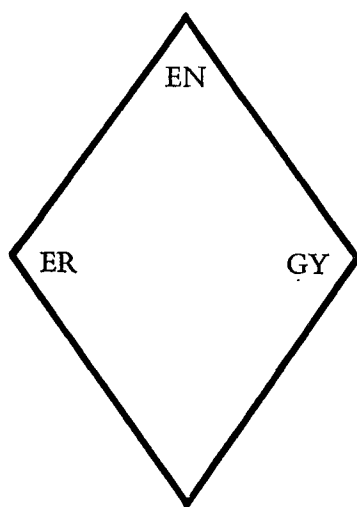
& shaky too

the wind that gives my baby chill shaky too

Money

The Big (Mental) Diamond Monkey

Energy :



(home)

ho hum

I wonder why this game
stays the same
year after year

taut

not too easy not too sleepy

just enough
—Balance—

(wire)

Curt Flood

stops short
then go ahead Full Blast

suddenly break off into mid-air the bat smacks & the ball sails

(curt)

a flood of You Must Know All About It By Now
from the hysterical crowd of 250 thou

I'm hooked

in tribute sound...

Spring 1971

Johnny

His mother caught him sitting on the toilet with his pants down. On the edge of the bathtub, directly in front of him was a photograph of a naked girl with her pubic hair showing.

Everything looked as though he were about to masturbate.

Mother thought masturbation was simply dreadful, and she let him know it as she confiscated the picture.

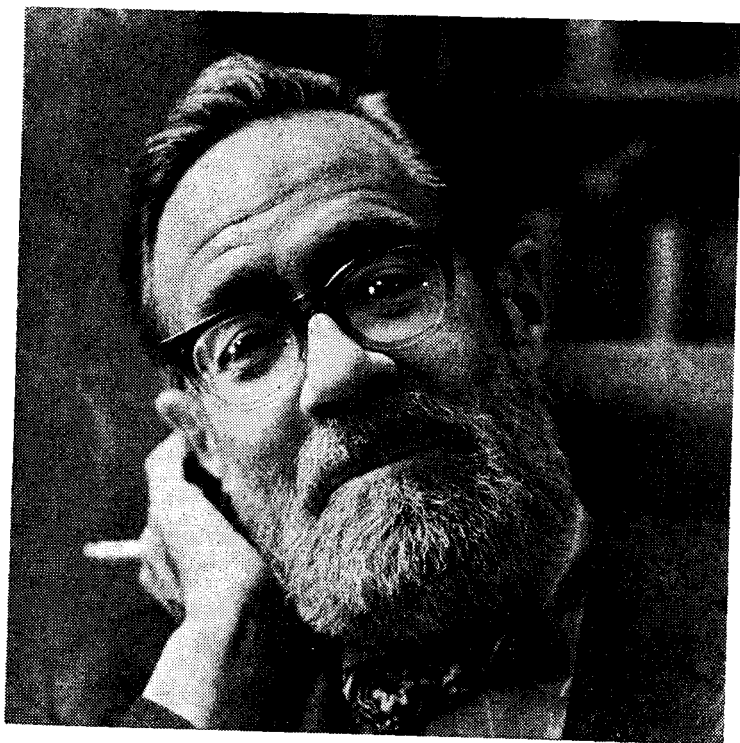
Johnny 2

His mother caught him sitting on the toilet with his pants down. On the edge of the bathtub, directly in front of him was a photograph of a naked girl with her pubic hair showing.

Everything looked as if he were about to masturbate.

Mother thought that masturbation was simply dreadful, and she let him know it, with a quick smack on the cheek.

John Berryman 1914-72



On a Sunday afternoon in late July, 1970, John Berryman gave a reading of his poems in a small "people's park" in Minneapolis near the west bank campus of the University of Minnesota. Following the reading, I introduced myself—we hadn't seen each other since I was his student, eight years earlier—and we spent the afternoon in conversation at his house. He had had a very bad winter, he explained, and had spent much of the spring in the extended-care

ward at St. Mary's Hospital. I asked him about doing an interview. He agreed, and we set up an appointment for late October.

Berryman spent a week in Mexico at the end of the summer—and had “a marvelous time.” A trip to upstate New York for a reading followed, and by early October he was back at St. Mary's. It was there that the interview was conducted, during visiting hours on the 27th and 29th of October.

He looked much better than he had during the summer, was heavier and more steady on his feet. He again smoked, and drank coffee almost continually. The room was spacious and Berryman was quite at home in it. In addition to the single bed, it contained a tray-table that extended over the bed, a chair, and two nightstands, one of which held a large AM-FM radio and the usual hospital accoutrements. Books and papers covered the other nightstand, the table, and the broad window sill.

Berryman was usually slow to get going on an answer, as he made false starts looking for just the right words. Once he started talking, he would continue until he had exhausted the subject—thus some of his answers are very long. This method left unasked questions, and the most important of these were mailed to him later for written answers. In contrast to the taped answers, the written answers turned out to be brief, flat, and even dull. (These have been discarded.) By way of apology, he explained that he was again devoting his energies almost entirely to writing poetry.

An edited typescript of the interview was sent him in January, 1971. He returned it in March, having made very few changes. He did supply some annotations, and these have been left as he put them.

INTERVIEWER

Mr. Berryman, recognition came to you late, in comparison with writers like Robert Lowell and Delmore Schwartz. What effect do you think fame has on a poet? Can this sort of success ruin a writer?

BERRYMAN

I don't think there are any generalizations at all. If a writer

gets hot early, then his work ought to become known early. If it doesn't, he is in danger of feeling neglected. We take it that all young writers overestimate their work. It's impossible not to—I mean if you recognized what shit you were writing, you wouldn't write it. You have to believe in your stuff—every day has to be the new day on which the new poem may be *it*. Well, fame supports that feeling. It gives self-confidence, it gives a sense of an actual, contemporary audience, and so on. On the other hand, unless it is sustained, it can cause trouble—and it is very seldom sustained. If your first book is a smash, your second book gets kicked in the face, and your third book, and lots of people, like Delmore, can't survive that disappointment. From that point of view, early fame is very dangerous indeed, and my situation, which was so painful to me for many years, was really in a way beneficial.

I overestimated myself, as it turned out, and felt bitter, bitterly neglected; but I had certain admirers, certain high judges on my side from the beginning, so that I had a certain amount of support. Moreover, I had a kind of indifference on my side—much as Joseph Conrad did. A reporter asked him once about reviews, and he said, "I don't read my reviews. I measure them." Now, until I was about thirty-five years old, I not only didn't read my reviews, I didn't measure them, I never even looked at them. That is so peculiar that close friends of mine wouldn't believe me when I told them. I thought that was indifference, but now I'm convinced that it was just that I had no skin on—you know, I was afraid of being killed by some remark. Oversensitivity. But there was an *element* of indifference in it, and so the public indifference to my work was countered with a certain amount of genuine indifference on my part, which has been very helpful since I became a celebrity. Auden once said that the best situation for a poet is to be taken up early and held for a considerable time and then dropped after he has reached the level of indifference.

Something else is in my head; a remark of Father Hopkins to Bridges. Two completely unknown poets in their thirties

—fully mature—Hopkins one of the great poets of the century, and Bridges awfully good. Hopkins with no audience and Bridges with thirty readers. He says, “Fame in itself is nothing. The only thing that matters is virtue. Jesus Christ is the only true literary critic. But,” he said, “from any lesser level or standard than that, we must recognize that fame is the true and appointed setting of men of genius.” That seems to me appropriate. This business about geniuses in neglected garrets is for the birds. The idea that a man is somehow no good just because he becomes very popular, like Frost, is nonsense also. There are exceptions, Chatterton, Hopkins of course, Rimbaud, you can think of various cases, but on the whole, men of genius were judged by their contemporaries very much as posterity judges them. So if I were talking to a young writer, I would recommend the cultivation of extreme indifference to both praise and blame, because praise will lead you to vanity and blame will lead you to self-pity, and both are bad for writers.

INTERVIEWER

What is your reaction to such comments as: “If Berryman is not America’s finest living poet, then he is surely running a close second to Lowell”?

BERRYMAN

Well, I don’t know. I don’t get any *frisson* of excitement back here, and my bank account remains the same, and my view of my work remains the same, and in general I can say that everything is much the same after that is over.

INTERVIEWER

It seems that you, along with Frost and several other American writers, were appreciated earlier in England than in America.

BERRYMAN

That’s true. More in Frost’s case. Stephen Crane is another.

INTERVIEWER

Why do you think this is true?

BERRYMAN

I wonder. The literary cultures are still very different. Right this minute, for example, the two best reviewers of poetry in English, and perhaps the only two to whom I have paid the slightest attention, are both Englishmen—Kermode and Alvarez. Of course, that's just a special case—ten years ago it was different, but our people have died or stopped practicing criticism. We couldn't put out a thing like the *Times Literary Supplement*. We just don't have it. Education at the elite level is better in England, humanistic education—never mind technical education, where we are superior or at least equal—but Cambridge, Oxford, London, and now the red-brick universities provide a much higher percentage of intelligent readers in the population—the kind of people who listen to the Third Programme and read the *Times Literary Supplement*. They are rather compact and form a body of opinion from which the reviewers both good and mediocre don't have to stand out very far. In our culture, we also, of course, have good readers, but not as high a percentage—and they are incredibly dispersed geographically. It makes a big difference.

INTERVIEWER

You, along with Lowell, Sylvia Plath, and several others, have been called a confessional poet. How do you react to that label?

BERRYMAN

With rage and contempt! Next question.

INTERVIEWER

Are the sonnets "confessional"?

BERRYMAN

Well, they're about her and me. I don't know. The word doesn't mean anything. I understand the confessional to be a

place where you go and talk with a priest. I personally haven't been to confession since I was twelve years old.

INTERVIEWER

You once said: "I masquerade as a writer. Actually I am a scholar." At another time you pointed out that your passport gives your occupation as "Author" and not "Teacher." How do your roles as teacher and scholar affect your role as poet?

BERRYMAN

Very, very hard question. Housman is one of my heroes and always has been. He was a detestable and miserable man. Arrogant, unspeakably lonely, cruel, and so on, but an absolutely marvelous minor poet, I think, and a great scholar. And I'm about *equally* interested in those two activities. In him they are perfectly distinct. You are dealing with an absolute schizophrenic. In me they seem closer together, but I just don't know. Schwartz once asked me why it was that all my Shakespearian study had never showed up anywhere in my poetry, and I couldn't answer the question. It was a piercing question because his early poems are really very much influenced by Shakespeare's early plays. I seem to have been sort of untouched by Shakespeare, although I have had him in my mind since I was twenty years old.

INTERVIEWER

I don't agree with that. One of the dream songs, one of those written to the memory of Delmore Schwartz—let me see if I can find it. Here, number 147. These lines:

Henry's mind grew blacker the more he thought.
He looked onto the world like the act of an aged whore.
Delmore Delmore.

He flung to pieces and they hit the floor.
That sounds very Shakespearian to me.

BERRYMAN

That sounds like *Troilus and Cressida*, doesn't it? One of my very favorite plays. I would call that Shakespearian. Not to

praise it, though, only in description. I was half-hysterical writing that song. It just burst onto the page. It took only as long to compose as it takes to write it down.

INTERVIEWER

Well, that covers scholarship. How about teaching? Does teaching only get in the way of your work as a poet?

BERRYMAN

It depends on the kind of teaching you do. If you teach creative writing, you get absolutely nothing out of it. Or English—what are you teaching? People you read twenty years ago. Maybe you pick up a little if you keep on preparing, but very few people keep on preparing. Everybody is lazy, and poets, in addition to being lazy, have another activity which is very demanding, so they tend to slight their teaching. But I give courses in the history of civilization, and when I first began teaching here I nearly went crazy. I was teaching Christian origins and the Middle Ages, and I had certain weak spots. I was O.K. with *The Divine Comedy* and certain other things, but I had an awful time of it. I worked it out once, and it took me nine hours to prepare a fifty-minute lecture. I have learned much more from giving these lecture courses than I ever learned at Columbia or Cambridge. It has forced me out into areas where I wouldn't otherwise have been, and, since I am a scholar, these things are connected. I make myself acquainted with the scholarship. Suppose I'm lecturing on Augustine. My Latin is very rusty, but I'll pay a certain amount of attention to the Latin text in the Loeb edition, with the English across the page. Then I'll visit the library and consult five or six old and recent works on St. Augustine, who is a particular interest of mine anyway. Now all that becomes part of your equipment for poetry, even for lyric poetry. The Bradstreet poem is a very learned poem. There is a lot of theology in it, there is a lot of theology in *The Dream Songs*. Anything is useful to a poet. Take observation of nature, of which I have absolutely none. It makes possible a world of moral observation for Frost, or Hopkins.

So scholarship and teaching are directly useful to my activity as a writer.

INTERVIEWER

But not the teaching of creative writing. You don't think there is any value in that for you as a poet.

BERRYMAN

I enjoy it. Sometimes your kids prove awfully good. Snodgrass is well known now, and Bill Merwin—my students—and others, and it's delightful to be of service to somebody. But most of them have very little talent, and you can't over-encourage them; that's impossible. Many of my friends teach creative writing. I'm not putting it down, and it certainly is an honest way of earning a living, but I wouldn't recommend it to a poet. It is better to teach history or classics or philosophy or the kind of work I do here in Humanities.

INTERVIEWER

You have given Yeats and Auden as early influences on your poetry. What did you learn from them?

BERRYMAN

Practically everything I could then manipulate. On the other hand, they didn't take me very far, because by the time I was writing really well, in 1948—that's the beginning of the Bradstreet poem and the last poems in the collection called *The Dispossessed*—there was no Yeats around and no Auden. Some influence from Rilke, some influence from a poet whom I now consider very bad, Louis Aragon, in a book called *Crèvecoeur*—he conned me. He took all his best stuff from Apollinaire, whom I hadn't then read, and swept me off my feet. I wrote a poem called "Narcissus Moving," which is as much like Aragon as possible, and maybe it's just as bad. I don't know. Then the Bradstreet poem—it is not easy to see the literary ancestry of that poem. Who has been named? Hopkins. I don't see that. Of course there are certain verbal practices, but on the whole, not. The stanza has been supposed

to be derived from the stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland." I don't see that. I have never read "The Wreck of the Deutschland," to tell you the truth, except the first stanza. Wonderful first stanza. But I really just couldn't get onto it. It's a set piece, and I don't like set pieces. I'll bet it's no good—well, you know, not comparable with the great short poems. Then Lowell has been named. I see the influence of *Lord Weary's Castle* in some of the later poems in *The Dispossessed*. There's no doubt about it. In the Bradstreet poem, as I seized inspiration from *Augie March*, I sort of seized inspiration, I think, from Lowell, rather than imitated him. I can't think, offhand—I haven't read it in many years—of a single passage in the Bradstreet poem which distinctly sounds like Lowell. However, I may be quite wrong about this, since people have named him. Other people? I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER

How about Eliot? You must have had to reckon with Eliot in one way or another, positively or negatively.

BERRYMAN

My relationship with Eliot was highly ambiguous. In the first place, I refused to meet him on three occasions in England, and I think I mentioned this in one of the poems I wrote last spring. I had to fight shy of Eliot. There was a certain amount of hostility in it, too. I only began to appreciate Eliot much later, after I was secure in my own style. I now rate him very high. I think he is one of the greatest poets who ever lived. Only sporadically good. What he would do—he would collect himself and write a masterpiece, then relax for several years writing prose, earning a living, and so forth; then he'd collect himself and write another masterpiece, very different from the first, and so on. He did this about five times, and after the *Four Quartets* he lived on for twenty years. Wrote absolutely nothing. It's a very strange career. Very—a pure system of spasms. My career is like that. It is horribly like that. But I feel deep sympathy, admiration, and even love for Eliot over all the recent decades.

INTERVIEWER

You knew Dylan Thomas pretty well, didn't you?

BERRYMAN

Pretty well, pretty well. We weren't close friends.

INTERVIEWER

Any influence there?

BERRYMAN

No. And that's surprising, very surprising, because we used to knock around in Cambridge and London. We didn't discuss our poetry much. He was far ahead of me. Occasionally he'd show me a poem or I'd show him a poem. He was very fond of making suggestions. He didn't like a line in a poem of mine, later published by Robert Penn Warren in *The Southern Review*, called "Night and the City"—a very bad poem modeled on a poem by John Peale Bishop called "The Return." Well, Dylan didn't like one line, and so he proposed this line: "A bare octagonal ballet for penance." Now, my poem was rather incoherent, but couldn't contain—you know, in the military sense—it couldn't contain that! I was very fond of him. I loved him, and I thought he was a master. I was wrong about that. He was not a master; he became a master only much later on. What he was then is a great rhetorician. Terrific. But the really great poems only came towards the end of World War II, I think. There was no influence.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think he had an impulse towards self-destruction?

BERRYMAN

Oh, absolutely. He was doomed already when I first knew him. Everybody warned him for many years.

INTERVIEWER

Can one generalize on that? So many of the poets of your generation have encountered at least personal tragedy—flirting with suicide, and so on.

BERRYMAN

I don't know. The record is very bad. Vachel Lindsay killed himself. Hart Crane killed himself, more important. Sara Teasdale—quite a good poet at the end, killed herself. Then Miss Plath recently. Randall—it's not admitted, but apparently he did kill himself—and Roethke and Delmore might just as well have died of alcoholism. They died of heart attacks, but that's one of the main ways to die from alcoholism. And Dylan died in an alcoholic coma. Well, the actual cause of death was bronchitis. But he went into shock in the Chelsea, where I was staying also, and they got him to the hospital in an ambulance, where he was wrongly treated. They gave him morphine, which is contraindicated in cases of alcoholic shock. He wouldn't have lived anyway, but they killed him. He lay in a coma for five days.

INTERVIEWER

You were there weren't you?

BERRYMAN

I was in the corridor, ten feet away.

INTERVIEWER

What was it like to take high tea with William Butler Yeats?

BERRYMAN

All I can say is that my mouth was dry and my heart was in my mouth. Thomas had very nearly succeeded in getting me drunk earlier in the day. He was full of scorn for Yeats, as he was for Eliot, Pound, Auden. He thought my admiration for Yeats was the funniest thing in that part of London. It wasn't until about three o'clock that I realized that he and I were drinking more than usual. I didn't drink much at that time; Thomas drank much more than I did. I had the sense to leave. I went back to my chambers, Cartwright Gardens, took a cold bath, and just made it for the appointment. I remember the taxi ride over. The taxi was left over from the First World

War, and when we arrived in Pall Mall—we could see the Atheneum—the driver said he didn't feel he could get in. Finally I decided to abandon ship and take off on my own. So I went in and asked for Mr. Yeats. Very much like asking, "Is Mr. Ben Jonson here?" And he came down. He was much taller than I expected, and haggard. Big though, big head, rather wonderful looking in a sort of a blunt, patrician kind of way, but there was something shrunken also. He told me he was just recovering from an illness. He was very courteous, and we went in to tea. At a certain point, I had a cigarette, and I asked him if he would like one. To my great surprise he said yes. So I gave him a Craven-A and then lit it for him, and I thought, "Immortality is mine! From now on it's just a question of reaping the fruits of my effort." He did most of the talking. I asked him a few questions. He did not ask me any questions about myself, although he was extremely courteous and very kind. At one point he said, "I have reached the age when my daughter can beat me at croquet," and I thought, "Hurrah, he's human!" I made notes on the interview afterwards, which I have probably lost. One comment in particular I remember. He said, "I never revise now"—you know how much he revised his stuff—"but in the interests of a more passionate syntax." Now that struck me as a very good remark. I have no idea what it meant, and still don't know, but the longer I think about it, the better I like it. He recommended various books to me, by his friend, the liar, Gogarty, and I forget who else. The main thing was just the presence and existence of my hero.

INTERVIEWER

William Faulkner once ventured to rate himself among contemporary novelists. He rated Thomas Wolfe first, himself second, Dos Passos third, Hemingway fourth, and Steinbeck fifth.

BERRYMAN

Oh, no! Really? That's deluded! The list is abominable. I think what must have happened is this. There are two ways to

rank writers: in terms of gift and in terms of achievement. He was ranking Wolfe in terms of gift. Wolfe had a colossal gift. His achievement, though—to rank him first and Hemingway fourth is openly grotesque.

INTERVIEWER

Would you be interested in doing this, in ranking yourself among contemporary American poets?

BERRYMAN

I don't think I could do it. I'll tell you why. First, most of these characters are personal friends of mine, and you just don't sit around ranking your friends. After I published *The Dispossessed* in '48, I quit reviewing poetry. By that time I knew most of the people writing verse, and how can you deliver a fair judgment of the man you had dinner with the night before? Preposterous! It's supposed to be easy, but actually it's impossible. My love of such poets as Schwartz, *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*, Roethke, and Lowell, *Lord Weary's Castle*, is very great. I would love to be in their company, and I feel convinced that I am, but I don't want to do any ranking. It's just not a sweat.

INTERVIEWER

In *The Dream Songs* there is a passage about assistant professors becoming associate professors by working on your poems. How do you feel about being cannon fodder for aspiring young critics and graduate students?

BERRYMAN

As for the graduate students, some of the work they do is damned interesting. A woman somewhere in the South did an eighty page thesis investigating the three little epigraphs to the 77 *Dream Songs* and their bearing on the first three books of the poem. I must say that her study was exhaustive—very little left to be found out on that subject! But it's good, careful work. I take a pleased interest in these things, though there is ineptness and naïveté, and they get all kinds of things

wrong and impute to me amazing motives. Another woman thought I was influenced by Hebrew elegiac meter. Now my Hebrew is primitive, and I don't even know what Hebrew elegiac meter is—and, moreover, neither does she. It's a harmless industry. It gets people degrees. I don't feel against it and I don't feel for it. I sympathize with the students.

The professional critics, those who know what the literary, historical, philosophical, and theological score is, have not really gone to work yet, and may not do so for a long time yet. I did have a letter once from a guy who said: "Dear Mr. Berryman, Frankly I hope to be promoted from assistant professor to associate professor by writing a book about you. Are you willing to join me in this unworthy endeavor?" So I joined him. I answered all his questions. I practically flew out to pour out his drinks while he typed.

INTERVIEWER

I would like to change the subject now and talk about your work. Let's start with *The Dream Songs*. As you know, there is some controversy over the structure of the work—why it was first published in two volumes, why it consists of seven sections of varying lengths, and so on. What structural notion did you have in mind in writing it?

BERRYMAN

Several people have written books about *The Dream Songs*, not published, and one of them, a woman, sees it as a series of three odysseys, psychological and moral, on the part of Henry, corresponding vaguely to Freud's differentiation of the personality into superego or conscience, ego or façade or self, and id or unconscious. Each has a starting point and a terminus and so forth. I don't know whether she is right or not, but if so, I did not begin with that full-fledged conception when I wrote the first dream song.

I don't know what I had in mind. In *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* my model was *The Waste Land*, and *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* is as unlike *The Waste Land* as it is possible for me to be. I think the model in *The Dream Songs* was the

other greatest American poem—I am very ambitious—“Song of Myself”—a very long poem, about sixty pages. It also has a hero, a personality, himself. Henry is accused of being me and I am accused of being Henry and I deny it and nobody believes me. Various other things entered into it, but that is where I started.

The narrative such as it is developed as I went along, partly out of my gropings into and around Henry and his environment and associates, partly out of my readings in theology and that sort of thing, taking place during thirteen years—awful long time—and third, out of certain partly preconceived and partly developing as I went along, sometimes rigid and sometimes plastic, structural notions. That is why the work is divided into seven books, each book of which is rather well unified, as a matter of fact. Finally I left the poem open to the circumstances of my personal life. For example, obviously if I hadn’t got a Guggenheim and decided to spend it in Dublin, most of book VII wouldn’t exist. I have a personality and a plan, a metrical plan—which is original, as in *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*. I don’t use other people as metrical models. I don’t put down people who do—I just don’t feel satisfied with them.

I had a personality and a plan and all kinds of philosophical and theological notions. This woman thinks the basic philosophical notion is Hegelian, and it’s true that at one time I was deeply interested in Hegel. She also thinks, and so do some other people, that the work is influenced by the later work of Freud, especially *Civilization and its Discontents*, and that is very likely. For years I lectured on the book every year here at Minnesota, so I am very, very familiar with it—almost know it word by word. But at the same time I was what you might call open-ended. That is to say, Henry to some extent was in the situation that we are all in in actual life—namely, he didn’t know and I didn’t know what the bloody fucking hell was going to happen next. Whatever it was he had to confront it and get through. For example, he dies in book IV and is dead throughout the book, but at the end of the poem he is still alive, and in fairly good condition, after having died himself again.

The poem does not go as far as "Song of Myself." What I mean by that is this: Whitman denies that "Song of Myself" is a long poem. He has a passage saying that he had long thought that there was no such thing as a long poem and that when he read Poe he found that Poe summed up the problem for him. But here it is, sixty pages. What's the notion? He doesn't regard it as a literary work at all, in my opinion—he doesn't quite say so. It proposes a new religion—it is what is called in Old Testament criticism a wisdom work, a work on the meaning of life and how to conduct it. Now I don't go that far—*The Dream Songs* is a literary composition, it's a long poem—but I buy a little of it. I think Whitman is right with regard to "Song of Myself." I'm prepared to submit to his opinion. He was crazy, and I don't contradict madmen. When William Blake says something, I say thank you, even though he has uttered the most hopeless fallacy that you can imagine. I'm willing to be their loving audience. I'm just hoping to hear something marvelous from time to time, marvelous and true. Of course *The Dream Songs* does not propose a new system; that is not the point. In that way it is unlike "Song of Myself." It remains a literary work.

INTERVIEWER

Christopher Ricks has called *The Dream Songs* a theodicy. Did you have any such intention in writing the poem?

BERRYMAN

It is a tough question. The idea of a theodicy has been in my mind at least since 1938. There is a passage in Delmore's first book, *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities*, which goes: "The theodicy I wrote in my high school days / Restored all life from infancy." Beautiful! He is the most underrated poet of the twentieth century. His later work is *absolutely* no good, but his first book is a masterpiece. It will come back—no problem. So that notion's always been with me. I can't answer the question. I simply don't know. I put my stuff, in as good condition as I can make it, on the table, and if people want to form opinions, good, I'm interested in the opinions. I don't

set up as a critic of my own work. And I'm not kidding about that.

INTERVIEWER

You once said that, among other things, a long poem demands "the construction of a world rather than the reliance upon one already existent." Does the world of *The Dream Songs* differ from the existent world?

BERRYMAN

This is connected with your previous question. I said that *The Dream Songs* in my opinion—only in my opinion—does not propose a new system, like Whitman. But as to the creation of a world: it's a hard question to answer. Suppose I take this business of the relation of Henry to me, which has interested so many people, and which is categorically denied by me in one of the forewords. Henry both is and is not me, obviously. We touch at certain points. But I am an actual human being; he is nothing but a series of conceptions—my conceptions. I brush my teeth; unless I say so somewhere in the poem—I forget whether I do or not—he doesn't brush his teeth. He only does what I make him do. If I have succeeded in making him believable, he performs all kinds of other actions besides those named in the poem, but the reader has to make them up. That's the world. But it's not a religious or philosophical system.

INTERVIEWER

Where did you get the name Henry?

BERRYMAN

Ah, big sweat about that too. Did I get it from *The Red Badge of Courage* or *A Farewell to Arms* or what? O.K., I'll tell you where it came from. My second wife, Ann, and I were walking down Hennepin Avenue one momentous night. Everything seemed quite as usual, but it was going to puzzle literary critics on two continents many years later. Anyway, we were joking on our way to a bar to have a beer, and I

decided that I hated the name Mabel more than any other female name, though I could mention half a dozen others that I didn't like either. We had passed from names we liked to names we disliked, and she decided that Henry was the name that she found completely unbearable. So from then on, for a long time, in the most cozy and affectionate lover kind of talk—we hadn't been married very long at this time—she was Mabel and I was Henry in our scene. So I started the poem. The poem began with a song that I killed. I've never printed it. It set the prosodic pattern, but for various reasons I killed it. It had not only a hero but a heroine. It was mostly about Henry, but it also had Mabel in it. It began:

The jolly old man is a silly old dumb
with a mean face, humped, who kills dead.
There is a tall who loves only him.
She has sworn "Blue to you forever,
grey to the little rat, go to bed."
I fink it's bads all over.

It winds up:

Henry and Mabel ought to but can't.
Childness let's have us honey—

Then, for reasons which I don't remember, I wiped Mabel out and never printed that song. For a long time after that, every now and then Ann would complain that Mabel didn't seem to be taking any part in the poem, but I couldn't find myself able to put her back in the poem, so it has no heroine. There are groups of heroines, but no individual heroine. By the way, that first song sounds quite good. Maybe I ought to pull it out.

INTERVIEWER

You once said in speaking of *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* that you started out thinking you would write a fifty line poem and ended up with fifty-seven stanzas. When you started *The Dream Songs*, did you know how long it was going to be or how far you were going to go?

BERRYMAN

No, I didn't. But I was aware that I was embarked on an

epic. In the case of the Bradstreet poem, I didn't know. The situation with that poem was this. I invented the stanza in '48 and wrote the first stanza and the first three lines of the second stanza, and then I stuck. I had in mind a poem roughly the same length as another of mine, "The Statue"—about seven or eight stanzas of eight lines each. Then I stuck. I read and read and read and thought and collected notes and sketched for five years, until, although I was still in the second stanza, I had a mountain of notes and draftings—no whole stanzas, but passages as long as five lines. The whole poem was written in about two months, after which I was a ruin for two years. When I finally got going, I had this incredible mass of stuff and a very good idea of the shape of the poem, with the exception of one crucial point, which was this. I'll tell you in a minute why and how I got going. The great exception was this; it did not occur to me to have a dialogue between them—to insert bodily Henry into the poem... *Me*, to insert me, in my own person, John Berryman, *I*, into the poem...

INTERVIEWER

Was that a Freudian slip?

BERRYMAN

I don't know. Probably. Nothing is accidental, except physics. Modern physics is entirely accidental. I did not have the idea of putting him in as a demon lover. How he emerged was this. The idea was not to take Anne Bradstreet as a poetess—I was not interested in that. I was interested in her as a pioneer heroine, a sort of mother to the artists and intellectuals who would follow her and play a large role in the development of the nation. People like Jefferson, Poe, and me.* Well, her life was very hard in many, many ways. The idea was to make it even harder than it had been in history. There is a lot of history in the poem. It is a historical poem, but a lot of it is invented too. I decided to tempt her. She was unbelievably devoted to her husband. Her few really touching passages,

* Get the delusion (J. B., March, 1971).

both in verse and in prose, are about her love for her husband, who was indeed a remarkable man—and she was a remarkable woman, and she loved him, with a passion that can hardly be described, through their whole life together, from the age of sixteen on. I decided to tempt her. I could only do this in a fantasy; the problem was to make the fantasy believable, and some people think I have completely failed with that. It is not for me to judge. I am deeply satisfied. I only do the best I can—I think I succeeded and some other people do too.

So, with the exception of the dialogue in the middle—that's the middle third of the poem—all the rest was one whole plan, but it took a series of shocks to get it going. What happened. My wife and I were living in Princeton, had been for a year. She was in the hospital in New York for an operation, what they call a woman's operation, a kind of parody of child birth. Both she and I were feeling very bitter about this since we very much wanted a child and had not had one. So I had very, very strong emotions and solitude. Second, at this point Saul Bellow had almost finished *Augie March*, his first important novel and one of the great American novels, I think. His later novels are far more important still, but *Augie March* is a landmark. He had almost finished that and wanted me to see it. We didn't know each other very well—since then he has become perhaps my best friend—but he was living just a few blocks away. I remember sitting in my chair, drinking as usual, reading the typescript. It was very long, about 900 pages. I was amazed. The word "breakthrough" has become kind of a cliché. Every two minutes somebody in *Life*, *Time*, or *Fortune*, has a breakthrough. But the term does describe something that actually happens. A renaissance. Suddenly, where there was pure stasis, the place is exploding. For example, the twelfth century—suddenly Europe was blazing with intelligence and power and insight, fresh authority, all the things that had been missing for centuries. I recognized in *Augie March* a breakthrough—namely, the wiping out of the negative personality that had created and inhabited his earlier work. Some critics like those novels, but in my opinion they're shit. They're well-written, and if you look closely you can

see a genius coming, but the genius is absolutely not there—he is in a strait-jacket. In *Augie* he's there.

My plans for the Bradstreet poem had got very ambitious by that time. I no longer had any idea of a fifty-line poem. That was five years before. My idea was now very ambitious. The Bradstreet poem is just as ambitious as *The Dream Songs*. Saul once said to me that it is the equivalent of a 500 page psychological novel. That is exactly my opinion, also—in spite of the fact that it is short, the poem is highly concentrated. So I was exhilarated. One of my pals had made a major attempt. You know, these things don't happen very often. Most even very fine artists don't try to put up the Parthenon, you know, and most of those who do turn out to be impostors. Merely grandiose, like Benjamin Haydon, Keats' friend. A very good, very minor painter who thought he was Michaelangelo, then killed himself. It's hard to take the risk of joining that terrible, frightful company. Contemptible, pathetic, they move your heart but they draw you to scorn. Saul had decided to make a big attempt, so my idea of my poem improved.

And the third thing was that I had recently reread, for the first time in many years, *Anna Karenina*, which I think is the best portrait of a woman in world literature. You just can't mention any other attempt at a woman, except perhaps *Madame Bovary*. I recently reread it for a seminar I am giving, and I have a very high regard for it. It's a beauty. It deserves its reputation, which is saying a lot. But *Anna Karenina* is even greater. The only woman in American literature is Hester Prynne, and she is very good. I have great respect for her and the book, but *Mistress Bradstreet* is much more ambitious. It is very unlikely that it is better, but it attempts more.* So again my notion of my poem expanded. The fourth thing that got me going was this. I had been in group therapy. The analyst who had been treating me individually for several years set up a group. There were two lawyers, a chemist, an alcoholic housewife, a psychiatric social worker, and me. I tried to run the group, of course, and they all killed me. I would leave,

* Delusion (J. B., March, 1971).

and come back, and so on, but it was a shattering business—I mean emotionally shattering—much more so than individual therapy had been. That had been kind of cozy. Well, I got fed up and left the group forever, and this left me blazing with hostility and feelings of gigantism, defeated gigantism. So these four things—the deep wound of Eileen’s tragic operation, Saul’s wonderful daring, Tolstoy’s commanding achievement, and the emotional shock of my experience with the group—swung me into action, and suddenly I was on fire every second.

INTERVIEWER

What was your method of composition on that poem? You must have worked very hard to finish it in two months.

BERRYMAN

I started out writing three stanzas a day, but that was too much, so I developed a more orderly method. I got one of those things that have a piece of glassine over a piece of paper, and you can put something in between and see it but not touch it. I would draft my stanza and put it in there. Then I would sit and study it. I would make notes, but I wouldn’t touch the manuscript until I thought I was in business—usually not for hours. Then I’d take it out, make the corrections, put it back in, and study it some more. When I was finally satisfied, I’d take it out and type it. At that point I was done—I never touched any stanza afterward. I limited myself to one a day. If I finished at eleven in the morning, I still did not look at the next stanza until the next morning. I had a terrible time filling the hours—whiskey was helpful, but it was hard.

INTERVIEWER

Do you consider your latest book, *Love & Fame*, a long poem?

BERRYMAN

Love & Fame is very shapely and thematically unified, and in that it resembles a long poem. But it is absolutely and utter-

ly not a long poem at all; it's a collection of lyrics. The last eleven all happen to be prayers, but even there each poem is on its own. This is even more true in the earlier sections. It is unified through style and because most of the poems are autobiographical, based on the historical personality of the poet. By historical I mean existing in time and space, occupying quanta.

INTERVIEWER

How does the composition of *Love & Fame* compare with that of your earlier work? Did you write these poems more quickly than the long poems?

BERRYMAN

The composition was like that of the Bradstreet poem, and to some extent like that of *The Dream Songs*, many of which were also written in volcanic bursts. Not all. I worked daily over a period of years, but sometimes I would write fifty in a burst and then not write any for months. The Bradstreet poem, as I say, took two months. *Love & Fame* took about three months.

INTERVIEWER

What made you turn back to the short form after having written two long poems?

BERRYMAN

When I finished *The Dream Songs*, two years ago, I was very tired. I didn't know whether I would ever write any more poems. As I told you, it took me two years to get over the Bradstreet poem before I started *The Dream Songs*. Your idea of yourself and your relation to your art has a great deal to do with what actually happens. What happened in this case was something that contradicted my ideas, as follows. I saw myself only as an epic poet. The idea of writing any more short poems hadn't been in my mind for many years. The question after *The Dream Songs* was whether I would ever again attempt a long poem, and I thought it improbable, so I didn't expect to write any more verse.

But suddenly one day last winter I wrote down a line; "I fell in love with a girl." I looked at it, and I couldn't find anything wrong with it. I thought, "God damn it, that is a *fact*." I felt, as a friend of mine says: "I feel comfortable with that." And I looked at it until I thought of a second line, and then a third line, and then a fourth line, and that was a stanza. Unrhymed. And the more I looked at it, the better I liked it, so I wrote a second stanza. And then I wrote some more stanzas, and you know what? I had a lyric poem, and a very good one. I didn't know I had it in me! Well, the next day I knocked out a stanza, changed various lines, this and that, but pretty soon it looked classical. As classical as one of the *Rubáiyát* poems—without the necessities of rhyme and meter, but with its own necessities. I thought it was as good as any of my early poems, and some of them are quite good; most of them are not, but some are. Moreover, it didn't resemble any verse I had ever written in my entire life, and moreover the subject was entirely new, solely and simply myself. Nothing else. A subject on which I am an expert. Nobody can contradict me.* I believe strongly in the authority of learning. The reason Milton is the greatest English poet except for Shakespeare is because of the authority of his learning. I am a scholar in certain fields, but the subject on which I am a real authority is me, so I wiped out all the disguises and went to work. In about five or six weeks I had what was obviously a book called *Love & Fame*.

I had forty-two poems and was ready to print them, but they were so weird, so unlike all my previous work that I was a little worried. I had encouragement from one or two friends, but still I didn't know what to do. I had previously sent the first poem to Arthur Crook at the *Times Literary Supplement*. He was delighted with it and sent me proof. I in turn was delighted that he liked the poem, so I corrected the proof and sent him five more—I didn't want the poem to appear alone. So he printed the six, which made up a whole page—very nice typographically—and this was further encouragement.

* Delusion (J. B., March, 1971).

But I still wasn't sure. Meanwhile, I was in hospital. I was a nervous wreck. I had lost nineteen pounds in five weeks and had been drinking heavily—a quart a day. So I had my publisher in New York, Giroux, xerox a dozen copies, which I sent out to friends of mine around the country for opinions. It is a weird thing to do—I've never heard of anybody else doing it—but I did it, looking for reassurance, confirmation, wanting criticism and so on, and I got some very good criticism. Dick Wilbur took "Shirley & Auden," one of the most important lyrics in Part I—some of the poems are quite slight and others are very ambitious—and gave it hell. And I agreed—I adopted almost every suggestion.

I also got some confirmation and reassurance, but there were other opinions as well. Edmund Wilson, for whose opinion I have a high regard, found the book hopeless. He said there were some fine lines and striking passages. How do you like that? It is like saying to a beautiful woman, "I like your left small toenail; that's very nice indeed," while she's standing there stark naked looking like Venus. I was deeply hurt by that letter. And then other responses were very strange. Mark Van Doren, my teacher, an old, old friend and a wonderful judge of poetry, also wrote. I forget exactly what he said, but he was very heavy on it. He said things like "original," and "will be influential," and "will be popular," and so on, but "will also be feared and hated." What a surprising letter! It took me days to get used to it, and it took me days even to see what he meant. But now I see what he means. Some of the poems are threatening, very threatening to some readers, no doubt about it. Just as some people find me threatening—to be in a room with me drives them crazy. And then there is a good deal of obscenity in the poems, too. And there is a grave piety in the last poems, which is going to trouble a lot of people. You know, the country is full of atheists, and they really are going to find themselves threatened by those poems. *The Saturday Review* printed five of them, and I had a lot of mail about them—again expressing a wide variety of opinion. Some people were just purely grateful for my having told them how to put what they'd felt for years.

Then there are others who detest them—they don't call them insincere, but they just can't believe it.

INTERVIEWER

There has always been a religious element in your poems, but why did you turn so directly to religious subject matter in these poems?

BERRYMAN

They are the result of a religious conversion which took place on my second Tuesday in treatment here last spring. I lost my faith several years ago, but I came back—by force, by necessity, because of a rescue action—into the notion of a God who, at certain moments, definitely and personally intervenes in individual lives, one of which is mine. The poems grow out of that sense, which not all Christians share.

INTERVIEWER

Could you say something more about this rescue action? Just what happened?

BERRYMAN

Yes. This happened during the strike which hit campus last May, after the Cambodian invasion and the events at Kent State. I was teaching a large class—seventy-five students—Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, commuting from the hospital, and I was supposed to lecture on the Fourth Gospel. My kids were in a state of crisis—only twenty-five had shown up the previous Thursday, campus was in chaos, there were no guidelines from the administration—and besides lecturing, I felt I had to calm them, tell them what to do. The whole thing would have taken no more than two hours—taxi over, lecture, taxi back. I had been given permission to go by my psychiatrist. But at the beginning of group therapy that morning at ten, my counselor, who is an Episcopalian priest told me that he had talked with my psychiatrist, and that my permission to leave had been rescinded. Well, I was shocked and defiant.

historical luck, personal luck, health, things like that, then you have hard work, sweat. And you have ambition. The incredible difference between the achievement of A and the achievement of B is that B *wanted* it, so he made all kinds of sacrifices. A could have had it, but he didn't give a damn. The idea that everybody wants to be President of the United States or have a million dollars is simply not the case. Most people want to go down to the corner and have a glass of beer. They're very happy. In *Henderson the Rain King*, the hero keeps on saying, "I want. I want." Well, I'm that kind of character. I don't know whether that is exhausted in me or not, I can't tell.

But what I was going on to say is that I do strongly feel that among the greatest pieces of luck for high achievement is ordeal. Certain great artists can make out without it, Titian and others, but mostly you need ordeal. My idea is this: the artist is extremely lucky who is presented with the worst possible ordeal which will not actually kill him. At that point, he's in business. Beethoven's deafness, Goya's deafness, Milton's blindness, that kind of thing. And I think that what happens in my poetic work in the future will probably largely depend not on my sitting calmly on my ass as I think, "Hmm, hmm, a long poem again? Hmm," but on being knocked in the face, and thrown flat, and given cancer, and all kinds of other things short of senile dementia. At that point, I'm out, but short of that, I don't know. I hope to be nearly crucified.

INTERVIEWER

You're not knocking on wood.

BERRYMAN

I'm scared, but I'm willing. I'm sure this is a preposterous attitude, but I'm not ashamed of it.*

PETER A. STITT

* Delusion (J. B., March, 1971).

Notes on Contributors

Bruce Andrews' poems have been published in *Field*, *Mojo Navigatore*, *Guabi*, *Cafe Solo*, *The World*, *Penumbra*, *Genesis : Grasp*, *Roy Rogers*, *Baloney Street*.

John Ashbery's book, *Three Poems*, was recently published by Viking Press.

Glen Baxter's work has appeared in *Juillard* and *Adventures in Poetry*. "The Falls Tracer" was published by Tetrad Press.

Kenneth Bernard's *Night Club and Other Plays* was published by Winter House. A short novel, *The Maldive Chronicles*, appeared in *The Minnesota Review*.

Ted Berrigan's most recent collection of poems, *In the Early Morning Rain*, was published in England by Cape/Goliard and in the States by Grossman.

Joe Brainard's paintings and drawings are shown in New York at the Fischbach Gallery. *Selected Writings 1962-1971* was published by Kulchur Press.

Louis Cane's work is shown in Paris at the Yvon Lambert Gallery.

Larry Fagin's recent publications, *Landscape* and *12 Poems*, are Angel Hair Books.

Allen Ginsberg has been working on recordings of his collected poems. *City Lights* will publish a book of poems in 1972.

Michael-Sean Lazarchuk's poems have appeared in *Blue Suede Shoes*.

Harry Mathews published the first two installments of *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium* in *The Paris Review* #51 and #52.

Alice Notley's poems have appeared in *Sugar Mountain* and *The World*.

Sarah Plimpton has published fiction in *The Partisan Review*.

Lou Reed was a writer, singer, and guitarist in the Velvet Underground from 1966 to 1970.

David Rosenberg edits *Ant's Forefoot*.

Aram Saroyan's most recent books are *The Beatles* (Barn Dream Press) and *Cloth* (Big Table Books).

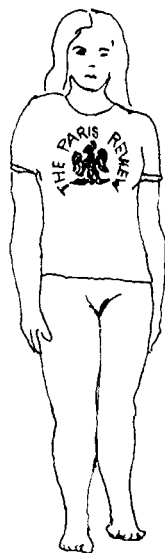
James Schuyler's new collection of poems, *The Crystal Lithium*, will be published in the fall by Random House.

David Shapiro's poem, "Ode," is included in his collection, *Man Holding an Acoustic Panel*, ©1971 by David Shapiro, published by E. P. Dutton, Inc., and used with their permission.

Peter A. Stitt has published poems, essays and reviews in *Shenandoah*, *The Minnesota Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, and *The New York Times Book Review*.

John Thorpe's poems have appeared in *Sugar Mountain*, *The World*, and *Buffalo Stamps*.

Anne Waldman's most recent book is *No Hassles* (Kulchur). She is editor of the anthology, *Another World* (Bobbs-Merrill).



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